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Assaults

Great Patriotic

City fight, he is the most difficult

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Even 2500 years ago, Sun Tzu advised avoiding the assault on cities because of the inevitability of heavy losses - much more than in a field battle. In the early autumn of 1941, Hitler categorically forbade his generals to storm Soviet cities, but a year later he retreated from this rule near Stalingrad, which led to the defeat of Paulus's army and a turning point in World War II. Stalin demanded that the cities be taken at any cost - the figures of the losses of the Red Army in Budapest, Königsberg, Breslau, Berlin are terrifying, involuntarily making one think about the need for such operations. On the other hand, they were generously awarded for successful assaults - in the USSR, a whole constellation of medals "For the Capture" of enemy cities was established. At the cost of a lot of bloodshed, we managed to develop effective street fighting tactics, create special assault groups, battalions and entire brigades, accumulate the richest combat experience, which, it would seem, guaranteed against repeating previous mistakes - however, half a century after the Victory, our generals again "stepped on the same rake" during the storming of Grozny ...

In a new book by a leading military historian, best-selling author of Stalin's Line in Battle, 1945. Blitzkrieg of the Red Army", "Afghan war. Combat Operations" and "Purgatory of the Chechen War", the brutal experience of assaults and urban battles, which are still considered one of the most

complex types of warfare. UDC 355/359 BBK 68

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Blessed memory

famous PORTUGUESE military historian

DEDICATED to Richard Mikhailovich

"A battle in a city, and even more so in a fortress, is the most difficult, often bloody type of military operations of troops... Try to avoid it..."

Sun Ji is a Chinese military theorist and commander of the 11th-19th centuries BC. e., author of the treatise "On the Art of War"

"No type of military action requires more talented leadership on the part of subordinate commanders and examples of personal valor than actions in close quarters and hand-to-hand combat, which inevitably take place in street battles ... Any commander involved in street fighting without a preliminary study of the situation and the peculiarities of its conduct, can easily fail.

From the instruction for junior officers of the English army

INTRODUCTION

Combat in the city has found wide application in military affairs since ancient times as a way of capturing fortified points (cities) and fortresses occupied by enemy garrisons. Until the 18th century, fortified cities were built on a relatively small area, surrounded by a fortress wall (fence) with towers. Since the XV] century, bastions, earthen ramparts and deep ditches, which were often filled with water, were added to the fortifications of the cities of fortresses. In the 10th century, the fortifications of the city-fortress were expanded due to the construction of one or two belts of Forts in front of the fortress fence (French - jup - fortification structures of an open (field) or closed (long-term) type). At the end of XX - beginning of XX century

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several fortifications began to unite into a fortified area, within the boundaries of which the city could also be.

There are a lot of examples of defense and storming of fortress cities in history. And this is not surprising. The side that was attacked and did not have the strength for a field battle preferred to defend itself in fortified cities, where the surrounding population also gathered in search of salvation. In this case, the other side was forced to take the fortress city by storm. Over time, the defense and assault of fortresses became bright pages in the book of the history of military art, to which the results of the entire war were often reduced, and the names of military leaders who held or captured the fortress city were forever inscribed in this book.

From ancient history, the reader knows the storming of the fortress of Kadesh by the Egyptians in 1312 BC. e. Sieges, blockades, and assaults on fortresses by warriors from Mesopotamia, Ancient India and Ancient China, Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome—later by the Turks, Muslims, English, French, Germans, and Russians—become typical.

The garrisons of the fortresses were very diverse in number: from 60-100 people to 115 thousand (Bautzen, Napoleonic wars), 165 thousand (Adrianople, civil war in the Roman Empire), 180 thousand (Belgrade, Austro-Turkish war of 1717). The storming troops had, as a rule, a numerical superiority of two or three times. In some cases, the forces were approximately equal. Thus, during the Russian-Turkish war of 1787-1791, a 15,000-strong detachment under the command of G.A. Potemkin, on December 17, 1788, stormed the Ochakov fortress, the garrison of which numbered more than 15 thousand soldiers and officers. | August 1789, the 25 thousandth Russian-Austrian detachment under the leadership of A.V. Suvorov captured the Fockmann fortress by storm, defeating the 30,000-strong Osman garrison.

pasha. On December 22 of the following year, Russian troops under the command of A.V. Suvorov, having 33.5 thousand people, stormed the fortress of Izmail with a garrison of 35 thousand people.

The siege of cities and fortresses often lasted quite a long time. The city of Alexandria, the capital of Egypt, withstood a 14-month Muslim siege in 642. Fortress

Amida in 359 with a 60,000-strong Roman garrison - a 73-day Persian siege of King Shatur. Only on the 143rd day did the Turkish Plevna capitulate in the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878. For more than a year, the Egyptians besieged the garrison of the Mahdist fortress of Khartoum in Sudan in 1884-1885. The Turkish fortress of Kara was stormed in 1855 after a five-month siege. Port Arthur withstood a 7-month siege by the Japanese. For 240 days, the Germans were preparing an attack on the besieged fortress of Tamburg during World War II. For two years, the garrison defended the fortress of Acre from the crusaders in 1189-119]. Only with the help of an approaching detachment of the British under the command of King Richard the Lionheart, the garrison of the fortress was forced to surrender to the Christians. Leningrad was blocked for 900 days and nights in World War II.

At the same time, in a number of cases, the siege and assault of the fortress took from two to five days. An example of this can be the assault on July 20, 1736 by the corps of Field Marshal P.P. Lassi of the Azov fortress with the capture of more than 4,000 prisoners. During the Seven Years' War, the troops of Field Marshal A.B. Buturlin on September 21, 1761 captured the Schweidnitz fortress (2600 prisoners), a detachment of Lieutenant General P.A. Rumyantsev on December 5 - the Kolberg fortress (5000 prisoners), and on September 16, 1770, after a three-day siege, the corps of Lieutenant General P.I. Bagration captured the Turkish fortress of Bendery. The enemy lost more than 5,000 killed and almost 11,000 captured.

Rome was besieged eight times by the Gauls, the Byzantines. The fortified city of Acre was besieged six times by tribes, Christians, Muslims, French, the same number of times by Arabs, French, crusaders, Turks Constantinople (Tsargrad), Istanbul. The Russian city of Smolensk was besieged five times by the Poles, Swedes, French, and Germans. The besieging troops during the siege often suffered heavy losses: Smolensk (in 1812) - more than 20 thousand, Semida - 30 thousand, Adrianople - 34 thousand, Port Arthur - 58 thousand, Acre - 120 thousand, Sevastopol - more than 150 thousand .

As historical experience testifies, cities and fortresses for many millennia were defensive structures, which were quite often attacked. There were several reasons for that. First, cities (fortresses) were, as a rule, at the intersection of routes (routes) of communication between principalities (countries, regions). They dominated the area. They housed large military garrisons, production and trade bases. The centers of the cities were the castles and strongholds of the rulers. A successful assault on a fortress often served as a turning point in a campaign (war) and had a moral and psychological impact on the inhabitants of nearby areas. The mass of prisoners turned into slaves, being the main labor force of the winners.

As the social system changed, the economy developed, including the military one, the role and place of cities and fortresses in solving the problems of armed struggle changed. Massive armies appeared on the battlefield, firearms of increasing power, from the beginning of the 20th century - armored vehicles, tanks, aircraft, airborne troops. At the same time, cities, medieval fortresses, many of which acquired the status of fortified areas, remained road junctions,

railway

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highways, centers of industrial production, including military, administrative facilities. This explains the ferocity with which the combat operations of the belligerents in the defense and storming of cities in 1941-1945 were carried out.

During the first period of the Great Patriotic War, German troops occupied hundreds of Soviet cities. In many of them there were heavy multi-day battles. On December 6, 1941, the enemy captured Yelets, on December 9, units of the 148th Infantry Division of the 13th Army (commanded by Major General A.M. Gorodnyansky) defeated the enemy's Yelets grouping, stormed the city, an important railway junction, including fortifications of the early 12th century. On November 8, 1941, the united groups of the army "North" of the enemy captured the outskirts of Tikhvin, trying to approach the Svir River to connect with

Finnish army and thus completely blockade Leningrad. The Soviet troops fiercely resisted, and on December 9, formations of the 4th separate army under the command of General of the Army K.A. Meretskov drove the Nazis out of the city, throwing them behind the Vahks. Particular courage and professionalism were shown by the soldiers of the 65th Rifle Division, commanded by the future Marshal of the Soviet Union P.K. Koshevoy.

One of the first cities that were liberated from occupation by the troops of the Western Front during the Battle of Smolensk was Rogachev. This happened on July 13, 1941. On July 16, Soviet troops liberated the city of Saltsy, on July 19 - Yartsevo, on July 21 - Velikiye Luki, on September 6 - Yelna. True, all these cities had to be liberated a second time a year and a half later. In total, during the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet Armed Forces liberated 727 cities of the Soviet Union from occupation, as well as 484 cities in nine European countries - Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Germany.

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mania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia. A significant number of them were captured on the move during offensive operations, more than 80 cities (fortified towns) were captured by storm, some of which were captured after many days and even many months of siege. The fortress city of Königsberg, for example, was blockaded on January 29, 1945, the assault began on April 6, and the fortress garrison capitulated on April 9. On May 2, 1945, the assault on the German capital, Berlin, ended. This was the end of the Wehrmacht, the armed forces of the fascist dictatorship that had come to power.

The storming of the city required a special military art. It could be carried out on the move, that is, without prior preparation, which was a rather rare occurrence. More often, an assault was preceded by a blockade - the isolation of the garrison of the city by violating its external relations on land, in the air and at sea (if the fortification is coastal) in order to exhaust the enemy and force him to surrender, as well as a siege - a method of military action to capture the city. (fortress), consisting in its environment, the construction of siege fortifications, the preparation of siege artillery, siege equipment (catapults, "ravens", battering rams), various kinds of towers, stairs, and digging. The most decisive stage in the subsequent actions of the advancing troops is a "gradual" (from line to line) or "accelerated" attack (A.V. Suvorov's term) of all the forces and means involved.

After the advancing troops, having overcome the resistance of the enemy on the outskirts of the city, broke into its streets, the battle began directly in the city. They had to fight their way through the streets, overcoming numerous blockages, taking quarters and individual houses turned into fortresses, often fighting for each floor of multi-storey buildings, and fighting in basements. At the same time, you need to understand that when fighting in a city, not all weapons can be used.

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fighting, to operate in large formations, great difficulties are created in matters of command and control of troops, in their material support. Therefore, the storming of cities and the conduct of hostilities in the city are singled out as a special section of military art, which must be mastered by commanders, headquarters and troops.

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When I entered the Military Academy named after M.V. Frunze, at the end of the first course, I was offered to develop a term paper on the topic "Features of the conduct of hostilities by formations of the 5th shock army during the capture of Berlin." The topic seemed easy to me, and I quickly wrote this term paper. But my supervisor, Professor of the Department of the History of Military Art, Colonel R.M. Portuguese, was very dissatisfied with the work presented to him. He explained that instead of revealing the peculiarities of military art, I limited myself to describing the course of battles on the basis of the available literature. I had to start all over again,

having previously figured out what should be understood by the features of the conduct of combat operations by formations. And only thanks to the patience and help of the manager I was able to successfully solve the problem. Later, under the leadership of R.M. Portuguese, I wrote several more term papers, a thesis, defended a dissertation, then we co-authored more than fifteen books. Unfortunately, in mid-August 2010, Richard Mikhailovich passed away, and Russian military history lost another excellent scientist-researcher, who has very few equals left in our country.

R.M. Portuguese was born in 1932 in Leningrad. Survived the blockade of this city as a child. In 1944 he was sent to study at the Gorky Suvorov

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less. Then he graduated from the Leningrad Military School and became an officer. But love for national history has always lived in the heart of this man. Therefore, taking advantage of the opportunity, he graduated in absentia from the Faculty of History of the Leningrad State Pedagogical University. But I did not have a chance to become a historian right away. The military service took practically all the time, constantly demanding the improvement of professional knowledge. Richard Mikhailovich successfully graduates from the Military Academy named after M.V. Frunze, served in command and staff positions for several years. And only in 1972 he managed to become a teacher at the department of the history of military art of the Military Academy named after M.V. Frunze. The next 20 years of life, pedagogical and scientific activity of this person were inextricably linked with this department. He defends his candidate's and doctoral dissertations, becomes an assistant professor, and then a professor, and is appointed head of the department. He is awarded the honorary title of Honored Scientist of the Russian Federation.

R.M. The Portuguese is not just an eminent scientist and teacher. He became the founder of a school for the training of professional personnel of military historians: under his scientific guidance, dozens of students defend candidate dissertations, and two people defend doctoral dissertations. In parallel, Richard Mikhailovich is constantly working on the creation of scientific papers, books and articles, the total number of which has exceeded 300. Some of his books have been published in Bulgaria, Hungary, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the USA.

I was also lucky to work in collaboration with R.M. Portuguese since 1987. Our first joint work was devoted to individual problems of military art, which over a certain period of time received a fairly dynamic development. Later we began to write papers on specific

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military operations and battles, began to analyze the activities of commanders and commanders in preparing operations and directing them in the course of hostilities. We were carried away by personalities and little-known pages of Russian military history. We planned to jointly develop this book, but, unfortunately, Richard Mikhailovich did not have time to complete this work.

Time flies forward irresistibly, and life, like history, does not tolerate subjunctive moods. Years pass, people leave. The excellent military historian R.M. Portuguese. But his numerous students and books remained, which are the best monument to this remarkable man.

The problem associated with the art of war during the storming of cities during the Great Patriotic War, R.M. and I. They started learning Portuguese together. At the same time, our differences in the consideration of this problem were immediately outlined. I was convinced that it was not necessary to storm large cities, in view of the complexity of organizing and conducting street battles, and advocated their blockade with the subsequent development of the offensive in depth. Richard Mikhailovich believed that the assault on some cities was necessary for political and operational-tactical reasons, subject to specific methods and methods of using forces and means.

It was possible to argue on this topic for a long time and not come to a final agreement. But life itself decided this issue for us. At the end of December 1994, Russian troops rushed to storm the city of Grozny, suffered heavy losses and got stuck in this city for a long time. The political will turned out to be stronger than human logic and the requirements of military art.

In modern governing documents of different countries there is a section "Combat in the city". This section sets out in sufficient detail the requirements for the preparation and conduct of operations and battles with the aim of mastering major

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settlements and industrial areas. These requirements have been developed by military experts on the basis of a large amount of previous experience, both successful and unsuccessful. Unfortunately, in peacetime this experience is not studied in depth enough, and the military command and commanders often repeat the mistakes of 50 years ago, needlessly losing people and military equipment.

In this book, I do not set myself the task of teaching how to fight in the city. Under new conditions, the experience of 50 years ago is not always applicable. I want to tell an inquisitive reader about how Soviet and German troops stormed the cities during the Great Patriotic War, what difficulties they encountered in solving this problem, and how in practice they used forces and means to achieve victory.

THE STATE OF THE SOVIET THEORY ON THE STORM OF THE CITY ON THE EVE OF THE WAR

After the end of the First World War and the Civil War, the Red Army included a large number of old military specialists who had a good education and extensive combat experience. Some of them worked at the Military Academy of the Red Army (later - the Military Academy named after M.V. Frunze), which in the 20s and the first half of the 30s was not only the highest forge of command personnel for the Red Army, but also the cradle of domestic military science. Within its walls, scientific discussions were constantly held on the most effective use of forces and means in operations and combat in modern conditions. Among these topical issues was the issue related to the battle in the city.

Two radically opposing opinions immediately emerged on this issue. Some believed that the assault on the city was not rational due to heavy losses, and its defense was always necessary. They proposed, when troops were leaving the city, to organize a blockade and fire heavy artillery until the garrison surrendered. Others believed that the fall of a large city would negatively affect the general morale of the enemy troops, and believed that an assault on it was necessary.

As a result of scientific discussions, it was decided that the decision to storm the city would be made depending on the situation, and its defense would always be considered as an effective means of disrupting the enemy's offensive. Therefore, in the Provisional Field Regulations of the Red Army, part 2 (division - corps), 1925 containing

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There was a special large chapter No. 12 "Fight in big cities", in which eight sections were placed:

1. General Provisions.
2. Features of the organization and composition of detachments for street combat.
3. Features of the operational plan for operational transfers for combat in large cities.
4. Peculiarities of reconnaissance in street battles.

5. Communication features in street fights.

6. Features of movement in big cities.

And then there were two big sections:

7. Peculiarities of offensive operations in large cities (attacking a city, attacking streets, attacking houses, fortifying).

8. Features of defense in large cities (defense of the city, defense of the streets, defense of the house).

At the beginning of the chapter "Peculiarities of offensive operations in large cities" it was said that "neither the blockade of the city, nor the bombardment by itself can force the courageous defenders of the city to surrender immediately. Only a resolutely carried out and carefully prepared attack can break the enemy's resistance.

But below was a warning that "complicated maneuvers to occupy the city should be avoided. Attacking a large city from all sides at once is unlikely to be expedient and will require huge forces. Therefore, it was recommended to attack with the main forces to choose "one or two of the most significant sectors covering especially vital points of the city. Demonstrative actions and intensified surveillance are being carried out against the rest of the sectors."

The very offensive (attack) on the city was to be divided into two parts. The first one envisaged, under the cover of artillery fire, the breakthrough of the outer belt of the city's defense and the creation of a bridgehead for a subsequent offensive into it.

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limits. In the second, the development of the offensive from the captured and secured bridgehead along selected sectors in columns of battalion strength in parallel directions or along streets converging to the city center.

At the same time, it was pointed out that "when the frontal advance of one of the columns is stopped, it is necessary to take a roundabout movement along the neighboring streets. You should not persist in attacks on individual defensive points: it would be better to temporarily block them, entrusting their capture to the reserves, and decisively break through to the center yourself. The capture of the center and the most important vital points of a large city will decide the fate of individual stubbornly defending points."

In the first section of the Field Manual, it was written that "street battles exceed field battles in their duration and in their nature approach the nature of battles in the mountains and in positions, because the main points in these battles are the attack and defense of closed gorges or the attack and defense of individual fortified points".

Further, the Field Manual warned that "city buildings present a number of inconveniences for combat. In large cities, it is very difficult to survey the terrain, monitor the enemy, command and control troops, organize communications, deploy troops in battle formation and organize interaction. At the same time, HE SAID THAT "urban stone buildings provide complete protection from rifle fire, protect to some extent from artillery shells, and, with a known adaptation, from poisonous substances. They give the garrison shelter from bad weather, completely cover it from the eyes of aerial reconnaissance and thus facilitate the use of the principle of surprise in street battles.

This Field Manual established that the main type of troops for fighting in large cities was infantry, reinforced with machine guns and supported by ar

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close support tilleria and flamethrowers. The cavalry is suitable only for the blockade of the city, fighting on its outskirts, communication and patrolling. Artillery firing indirect fire from indirect firing positions must give way to artillery firing direct fire.

The Charter stated that the lowest tactical unit capable of performing a combat mission along one street is a rifle company reinforced with a platoon of mortars, individual regimental artillery guns and knapsack flamethrowers. A rifle battalion, reinforced with light and howitzer batteries, armored vehicles, tanks, scooters and a squadron of cavalry, could perform a task on a section consisting of two or three streets. Regiments and divisions for fighting in the city should be given armored trains, separate teams of heavy mortars, flamethrowers,

aviation.

Regardless of the size of the tactical formation, strike (assault) groups or detachments had to be created to conduct combat in the city. The Red Army soldiers included in these formations should not be overloaded with combat equipment and armed with rifles, revolvers and special high-power grenades (Novitsky design grenades). Smoke screens were considered useful. Detachments and groups had to be supplied with entrenching tools, demolition equipment, light cartridges and searchlights. Each commander had to have a city plan. Guides were selected from among the local residents.

When preparing for a battle in a city, the commander had to carefully familiarize himself with its historical and statistical features. Particular attention should be paid to plumbing, electrical, railway, telegraph, telephone exchanges, the location of ammunition depots, military factories, barracks, workshops, government buildings, supply systems.

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city food supply. Then it was necessary to study in detail the general plan of the city, the direction of the streets, the nature of the buildings, the presence of gardens, squares, boulevards.

As a result of the initial preparation, the commander had to draw up a plan of the city, on which to indicate the existing strongholds, the location of the most important buildings, warehouses, railway stations and other important objects.

With all these reasonable recommendations, the Field Manual also contained recommendations of a purely political nature. So, from the commanders, whose troops were intended to storm the city, it was required "offensive actions on the city, if possible, to combine with the explosion of the enemy from within." This meant that friendly proletarian forces would definitely be in the city, ready to help the Red Army in the fight against the bourgeoisie. It was necessary to establish contact with these forces in a timely manner and incite them to revolt, and then promptly use the results of this popular uprising. It was pointed out that "troops produce the greatest effect if they appear in front of the rebellious city at dawn. If at the same time the enemy has weak reconnaissance and security, then a sudden capture of the city by us is possible.

Further, in the Field Manual of the Red Army of 1925, the features of the organization of reconnaissance and communications in street battles, the features of movement in large cities are considered. The organization of the attack on streets, individual houses, the procedure for securing captured sections of the city or important objects are described in detail.

On the whole, more than 19 pages were devoted to the problem of preparing and conducting combat operations with the aim of capturing a large city in this Field Manual, and these activities themselves were considered in great detail. In addition, the Field Manual of the Red Army of 1925 contained a rather extensive chapter "Features

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defensive actions in large cities", the study of which was supposed to help the attacking side understand the nature, strengths and weaknesses of the enemy's defense.

In the same 1925, the instruction "Combat Service of the Infantry. A guide for the officers of the Red Army", which contains a special section "Street fighting". In this instruction, in an abridged form, the main provisions of the Field Regulations of the Red Army of 1925 were outlined. At the same time, at the beginning of the chapter it was indicated that "the struggle for large settlements can take place under two conditions:

- a) when the mastery of the city, due to certain conditions, becomes the task of the chief;
- 0) when the struggle is waged in the city itself under conditions of civil war.

But, as you can see, the topic associated with the storming of large cities quickly began to lose its relevance. The Combat Manual of the Red Army Infantry of 1927 contains a chapter "Features of the battle for settlements, in forests, mountains, at river crossings and in winter." This chapter contained a small section, "The Battle for Settlements (Cities)", with a volume of only two pages. In this section, the procedure for preparing and conducting combat in the city was considered only in general terms, without detailing individual provisions.

In the Field Regulations of the Red Army of 1929, a small section "Combat in the city" on two pages was considered in the chapter "Actions in special conditions". At the same time, the preparation and actions of the troops during the storming of the city were outlined very briefly. On the other hand, it was said that the preliminary "reconnaissance of the city is aimed at clarifying the political state of the urban population and the possibility of attracting workers to the active struggle; the possibility and expediency of using working areas as strongholds (from the tactical side)". And only after that it was necessary to find out the composition and battle

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the ability of enemy units, the location of important objects in the city and draw up a plan of the city.

In the Provisional Field Regulations of the Red Army (PU-36), in the chapter "Actions in special conditions", there was a section "Fights for settlements", in which issues related to the preparation and conduct of the assault on the city were set out on just one page. Features of the battle in a big city were not considered at all in this document.

In the abbreviated Combat Manual of the Red Army Infantry (BUP-40), part 2 (company, battalion, regiment), dated January 1940 (160 pages), the chapter "Rifle company" contained the sections "Advance on the settlement" and "Rifle company in the defense of a populated area", in Chapter 3 "Rifle Battalion" - sections "Offensive on a populated area" and "Defense of a populated area". But in the chapter "The Rifle Regiment", issues related to the attack on the settlement and the defense of the settlement were not considered at all.

The outbreak of the Second World War, the battles of German troops with the aim of capturing Warsaw, the assault on the Mannerheim Line by Soviet troops clearly showed that issues related to hostilities in the city were considered extremely poorly in the guiding documents of the Red Army. To eliminate this shortcoming, a special commission was created through the General Staff and the headquarters of the Leningrad Military District, which worked for several months in the troops of the North-Western Front. Upon completion of this work, additions and changes to the existing Combat Regulations (BU-40) were developed.

In the expanded draft of the Combat Manual of the Red Army Infantry, part 2 (company, battalion, regiment), 1940 (367 pages), the chapter "Rifle company" contained the sections "Assault group", "Advance of a rifle company on a populated area" and "Rifle company in the defense of the settlement." In the section "Assault Group" it is said that each rifle platoon

(company) must be prepared to act as an assault group. At the same time, a rifle platoon had to be reinforced with heavy machine guns, separate escort guns, tanks (including flamethrower ones), sappers with explosives to blow up pillboxes and bunkers, chemists with smoke bombs or a chemical tank.

It was further stated that assault groups are an integral part of the combat formation of rifle companies. They must follow in the second echelon of subunits and be brought into battle by the decision of the company or battalion commander. The order of actions of assault groups in solving various combat missions, mainly during the assault on pillboxes and bunkers, was described in some detail. The order of actions of assault groups during a battle in a city was not considered in this section.

In the chapter "Rifle Battalion" there were sections "Advance of a rifle battalion on a populated area" and "Defense of a rifle battalion in a populated area". In the chapter "Rifle Regiment" - "The offensive of the rifle regiment on the settlement" and "The rifle regiment in the defense of the settlement".

At the same time, in the section "A rifle regiment in the defense of a settlement," it was warned that settlements with stone and adobe structures are often included in the defense and increase the resistance of troops, especially in anti-tank respect. Therefore, when attacking a large populated area, the regiment commander must understand that, in an effort to reduce the effectiveness of artillery fire and air strikes, the enemy will strive to push the front line of defense forward or carry a few deep into the populated area.

The section related to the offensive on the regiment's settlements prescribed that "the battle for settlements is carried out in close cooperation with the troops operating outside them. From the front, the settlement

part of the forces, and the main blow is delivered in the direction adjacent to the populated area, in order to encircle and capture the populated area after a breakthrough in this direction.

This meant that the Field Manual of the Red Army Infantry - the main guiding document for the organization of combat for a company, battalion and regiment - actually forbade a frontal assault on a settlement and required it to be captured after a complete blockade was established. At the same time, this document outlined the procedure for the assault on the besieged city and the actions of forces and means on its streets.

Thus, in the prewar years, the Soviet theory in the field of preparation and conduct of hostilities with the aim of capturing cities underwent quite a lot of different transformations. This issue was considered most fully in the Provisional Field Regulations of the Red Army, Part 2 (division - corps), 1925. But in subsequent years, this problem gradually loses its relevance and comes to the point that the guiding documents devote only a few pages of general reasoning to it. And only the beginning of World War II forced the Soviet military leadership to take a deeper and more detailed look at this issue.

GERMAN EXPERIENCE IN STORMING CITIES

The leadership of Germany, preparing for the outbreak of World War II, was well aware that during large-scale military operations, the issue of blockade and assault on individual cities, large settlements and fortified areas created on their basis would become acute.

Already in the first days of the offensive of the German troops in Poland, the question of the capture of the city of Poznan by them was acute. On September 2, A. Hitler demanded an intensive bombardment of this city

forces of the 7th aviation division. A strike group of the 10th German army was aimed at the city, and a large group of artillery began to move there. But on September 3, the question of a frontal assault on Poznan was removed from the agenda.

"I do not want to sacrifice the lives of German soldiers for the sake of this city," the Fuhrer declared. — There will still be a lot of cities on the way of the victorious offensive of the German troops. All of them will fall from fear of German weapons, and not from a long siege and a classic assault, for which we simply do not have time."

But it was not possible to avoid the assault on individual fortified areas. The fortress of Lomzha, a line of pillboxes with armored caps at the Novogrudok-Vyzna line, were kept on the defensive. German troops were forced to storm these fortifications on the move. And although the resistance of the Polish troops during the breakthrough was insignificant, Hitler did not approve of the offensive initiative of his generals.

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On September 16, the General Staff of the German Ground Forces raised the question of what to do with the capital of Poland, Warsaw, the ring around which was practically closed. Some generals put forward a proposal to storm Warsaw, but this proposal is rejected by others. The Chief of the General Staff of the German Land Forces, General F. Halder, makes a proposal: "Starve Warsaw to death! We have nowhere to hurry, since the troops standing in front of Warsaw, we do not need anywhere else.

A. Hitler, who at first was a supporter of a decisive assault, after listening to the arguments, ordered to block this city with troops, but to refrain from storming it. After that, a parliamentarian was sent to Warsaw, who demanded the surrender of the city without a fight. The Poles tried to delay the negotiations. Understanding this, the German command decided to inflict air strikes on Warsaw, expose the city to artillery shelling, and on September 20 begin an assault on the eastern suburbs (Prague) by ground forces.

On September 20, German troops reached Lvov, where they met with Soviet troops, who launched an offensive - a "liberation campaign" - into the Polish regions of Western Belarus and Western Ukraine from the east. The entry into the war of the Soviet Union and its blow to Poland to a large extent undermined the morale of the Poles, which was already not high. But the entire territory of Poland began a mass surrender of Polish troops, many military personnel left their units without permission and disappeared among the local population. But Warsaw, whose artillery shelling continued, was still not going to give up.

But it couldn't last that long. On September 26, a parliamentarian from Warsaw arrived at von Bock's headquarters with a Letter from the Polish General Rommel. The Poles asked for a truce for 24 hours to withdraw the civilian population from the city, which was rejected by the Germans.

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Von Bock demanded that a Polish officer be sent to negotiate the surrender of the city and at the same time ordered to intensify the shelling of his artillery. The Germans dropped agitation leaflets on the city from an airplane, promising the soldiers, in case of surrender, a quick return home, and the officers - the preservation of edged weapons. A massive air strike against Warsaw was scheduled for the next morning.

At 9 o'clock on September 27, Warsaw capitulated.

Thus, the blockade, air strikes and shelling of Warsaw by German troops lasted about 10 days. There was no assault on the city.

On October 10, while discussing the problems associated with the attack on Antwerp, the German command was forced to resolve the issues of a possible siege and assault on this city. F.

Halder writes about this in his War Diary: "How long the surrounded city will last (a month or two) does not matter. The political reasons that compelled us to act quickly against the fortresses in the East are absent here. In the West, one must act deliberately. Troops of the second or third category are best suited for encirclement. Every soldier left at the front to hold back the enemy, surrounded by our troops, is a lost soldier.

And a little lower: "Do not use tank formations against cities. The greatest effect from them is in an open field with sudden and massive use. We are worried about the danger of dispersion of forces in Belgian cities, primarily in countless industrial centers.

This entry speaks volumes. Firstly, it testifies to the negative attitude of the Wehrmacht command towards the assault of cities and fortified areas, despite the fact that the requirements for the implementation of their blockade remain in force. Also important are the views on the use of tank troops in

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combat in cities and other settlements (fortified areas).

After the German invasion of Holland, Antwerp held out for only one day, and on May 18, 1940, it was occupied by the enemy. The French were unable to organize the defense of their capital, and on June 14, German troops entered Paris. Among the German leadership and senior generals, the opinion was firmly established that impregnable fortresses for the German troops did not exist.

In developing a plan of aggression against the USSR, the General Staff of the German Ground Forces did everything possible to ensure that there were no large cities in the directions of the main attacks of army groups. Of course, this could not be completely avoided. Therefore, special instructions were developed for the commanders of armies aimed at attacking in the direction of the location of cities, large settlements and fortified areas, prescribing how to act in these directions. In particular, they indicated that cities should be blocked by infantry units, subjected to air and artillery strikes, and surrounded by mobile (tank and motorized) units.

One of the first fortified cities that stood in the way of the German offensive on the territory of the USSR was Brest, the center of the Brest fortified region. The first news about the Brest fortification dates back to 1019 and is contained in the Tale of Bygone Years. Since then, the Brest Fortress has repeatedly taken on the blows of various enemies. In some cases, it was captured by enemies, in others, enemy avalanches broke against its walls. Later, the city of Brest-Litovsk arose in the vicinity of the fortress. During the First World War, the Brest-Litovsk fortress and the city itself did not play any role in the defense of the Russian troops and were occupied by the German troops without a fight. The German occupation of Brest-Litovsk continued until February 1919,

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then the city ended up on the territory of the newly formed Poland. In August 1920, after the failure of the offensive of the troops of the Western Front (commander - M.N. Tukhachevsky), the Brest Fortress became a prison for 19 thousand Red Army soldiers captured by the Poles. Most of them died there from starvation, cold and abuse.

On September 13, 1939, German troops approached Brest and opened artillery fire on the fortress and the city. But the Germans were not going to storm the fortress, their tanks began to bypass Brest from the northeast. On September 14, the 3rd Panzer Division cut the railroad from Brest to Kobrin and Baranovichi. At noon of the same day, the 10th Panzer Division occupied no one

the defending city of Brest and the railway station. The 20th motorized division advanced to the fortress on the right bank of the Bug. The fortress was in a dense ring of blockade.

After that, the German infantry, supported by artillery and tank fire, began to storm the fortress. The Poles stubbornly resisted. Polish tanks turned out to be an insurmountable obstacle, blocking the gates of the fortress with their hulls and cannon and machine-gun fire. Behind the tanks, at a distance of up to 150 meters, anti-aircraft guns were installed, brought to horizontal fire by direct fire. Several German tanks on the outskirts of the fortress were blown up by mines, the infantry was shot from machine guns installed in the loopholes of the fortress. The Germans were forced to retreat.

The commander of the 10th Panzer Division, General Shtumf, whose units stormed the Brest Fortress, having learned about the failure of the first attack, was furious with the stubbornness of the Poles. But the subordinate commanders took this as distrust and in the second half of the day they resumed the assault on the fortress. In addition to the infantry, about 80 tanks were moved into the offensive. But this attack was also repulsed.

In the evening of the same day, the commander of the tank corps, General G. Guderian, arrived in the Brest region. He is organi

thirty

called the assault in accordance with all the rules. The German troops were overwhelmed by superiority in forces and means, the Poles could not oppose them with anything significant. Against 154 tanks and 260 German guns, the Poles had 18 field guns, 8 anti-aircraft guns and a dozen anti-tank guns.

All night on September 15, German guns fired at the fortress. In the early morning, after a massive artillery and aviation preparation, units of the 20th motorized and 10th tank divisions launched an assault. The defenders of the fortress continued to put up stubborn resistance. In some places it came to hand-to-hand fights. The fight went on all day. Attempts by the German command to support their troops with air strikes were unsuccessful: when they saw the planes, the defenders of Brest went to the casemates, the troops were so mixed up that the German pilots often attacked their units. Piurm on September 15 also choked on the crest of the ramparts.

G. Guderian ordered to stop the assaults and subject the defenders of the fortress to systematic artillery and air strikes. These strikes continued throughout the night and into the morning of 16 September. Only at 10 o'clock the assault detachments of the 20th motorized and 10th tank divisions again began the offensive. The German infantry rose to the crest of the ramparts, but the attack bogged down again, as the order to advance directly behind the artillery barrage was not carried out.

General G. Guderian, having learned about another failure, personally arrived at the fortress and, after clarifying the tasks and issues of interaction, gave the order to start a new Onslaught. But this assault also bogged down. The infantry withdrew with heavy losses. The adjutant of the corps commander Lieutenant Colonel Brauch was killed by a shot from a Polish sniper. But the position of the defenders was also difficult: losses in killed and wounded reached 40%, ending

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shells and grenades fell, many fortifications were turned into ruins, communication with the Polish command, located in Pinsk, was broken.

At 5 pm on September 16, at a meeting with the commandant of the fortress, it was decided to stop the resistance and break through from Brest through the still free path to Terespol, Koden. The withdrawal of troops was started at night. But it was on that night that the German command decided to launch a new assault on the fortress. I had to break out with fights, leaving barriers.

In the first half of September 17, units of the 76th Infantry Regiment broke into the citadel along the undestroyed bridge. Parts of the 20th motorized division went to the fortress from the side of the city.

The Brest fortress, which resisted for four days, fell. The losses of both sides in this battle remained unknown. But it is known that 988 Polish soldiers and officers were captured by the Germans in the area of the fortress.

But Brest, according to a secret protocol, was supposed to be on the territory of the Soviet Union, whose troops at that time were advancing towards the city from the east, making a "liberation campaign" in Western Belarus. On September 21, Soviet troops entered Brest, and at 4 p.m., a joint parade of Soviet and German troops took place on Lublin Union Street. The headquarters of the 4th army of the Belarusian military district moved to Brest from Ivantsevichi, which on July 11, 1940 was transformed into the Western Special Military District.

In the summer of 1940, the construction of the 62nd Brest fortified region began. Long-term structures were erected along the eastern bank of the Western Bug directly along the border in full view of the German border outposts. The forefield strip, due to the fact that the structures were built along the river bank, was not created. Such an arrangement of bunkers did not allow to cover the approaches to them with minefields and to carry out preliminary shooting from the guns built into them.

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Facade of the Brest Fortress

turmy of the Great Patriotic

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By June 21, 1941, 128 long-term firing points were concreted in the Brest fortified area, 11 of which were located in the area of the city and the fortress of Brest. Units of the 6th and 42nd rifle divisions of the 28th rifle corps (commander Major General V.S. Popov), as well as units of district subordination, were stationed in and near the Brest Fortress.

The city of Brest, which consisted mainly of buildings of the private sector, was not of particular interest in terms of defense. The Brest Fortress as a fortification has long lost its significance. Its buildings, partially restored after the events of September 1939, were used to house troops and warehouses in peacetime. The defense of the fortress was not provided. In the event of the outbreak of hostilities, the Brest garrison was supposed to go to the areas of concentration or take up defensive positions in prepared positions in the Brest fortified region; in the conditions of a sudden attack, the withdrawal of troops from the fortress became unrealistic. In order to leave the fortress, the troops needed at least four hours of time.

But the German command, which had experience in storming the Brest Fortress in 1939, prepared more carefully to capture this stronghold. So, General G. Guderian in his book "Memoirs of a Soldier" writes: "Brest-Litovsk (Brest) fortress with its old fortifications, separated from us by the Western Bug and Mukhovets rivers, as well as numerous take over only the infantry. The tanks could have taken it only with a sudden blow, which we tried to do in 1939. But in 1941, the conditions for this were no longer there.

Therefore, I decided to force the Western Bug on both sides of Brest Litovsk with tank divisions, and to attack the fortress I asked to subordinate the infantry corps to me ... The 4th Army was also supposed to temporarily give me to ensure the crossing of the river

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Western Bug several infantry and, above all, artillery units ... I did not count on the immediate fall of the Brest-Litovsk fortress ... "

According to the recollections of witnesses, by June 22 the Brest Fortress, like the city of Brest itself, was not prepared for defense. The same General G. Guderian writes: "Careful observation of the Russians convinced me that they did not suspect anything about our intentions. In the courtyard of the Brest Fortress, which was visible from our observation posts, to the sounds of an orchestra, they were making a dispensation of guards. Coastal fortifications along the Western Bug were not occupied by Russian troops. The works to strengthen the shore have scarcely made any headway in recent weeks. The prospects for maintaining the moment of surprise were so great that the question arose whether, under such circumstances, it was worthwhile to carry out artillery preparation for an hour, as envisaged by the order.

The offensive of the German troops for the Soviet command at the tactical level was sudden. German bomber and assault aircraft delivered a bomb attack on Brest.

Tank formations of G. Guderian's tank group immediately began to cover the Brest fortified area from the north and south. The 12th Army Corps of General Walter Schroth moved directly to Brest and the Brest Fortress. The storming of the Brest Fortress was entrusted directly to the assault detachments of the 45th Upper Austrian Division, which was reinforced by three artillery regiments, nine heavy mortars of 210 mm caliber and nine heavy mortar batteries "Nebelwerfer", which included 54 280 mm mortars capable of firing 45.4-kg mines. In addition, two 126-ton 600-mm siege artillery systems "Karl" were delivered in advance for firing at the Brest Fortress, firing high-explosive and concrete-piercing shells weighing | 7 and

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2.2 tons. It is quite clear that the losses among the Soviet troops and the destruction in the Brest Fortress were already huge in the first hours of the war. By 7 o'clock in the morning, units of the 45th and 34th German infantry divisions occupied Brest, and by the end of the day the remnants of the troops of the 4th Army were thrown back 25-40 kilometers from the state border. The fortress by 9 o'clock in the morning was completely blocked by the ENEMY.

A flurry of artillery fire fell on the Brest Fortress. Artillery fired at the frontiers. At each line, fire was fired for 4 minutes, then it was transferred to the next firing line, located at a distance of 100 meters. Behind such a barrage were moving assault groups created on the basis of units of the 130th and 135th infantry regiments, reinforced by units of the 81st engineer battalion.

It seemed that an offensive of this order could not meet with strong resistance. German troops broke into the fortress. But inside the fighting took on a fierce character. Moreover, separate groups of Soviet units even counterattacked the enemy. But from the very beginning, the defense broke up into separate pockets without a single leadership, without communication and without interaction. The first rebuff to the enemy was nothing more than a spontaneous reaction to the enemy, and did not have the character of a prepared defense.

The fight continued. To overcome the resistance of the fortress defenders, the German command was forced to use self-propelled guns, which, having entered the citadel, began to shoot individual firing points. Almost at the end of the first day of the assault, the Brest Fortress was occupied by the enemy, but officially it continued to fight until the end of July 1941.

of the year.

German losses during the assault on the Brest Fortress were heavy. They lost over 1500 soldiers and officers. In the Brest area, the first Soviet-made

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the German cemetery, where 482 soldiers and officers were buried. But the losses of Soviet troops killed and captured in the Brest region were much greater.

But one must understand that after June 22, neither the classical assault nor the classical defense of this stronghold

it was not done. Several surviving Red Army soldiers and commanders, hiding for the day in basements, came out of their shelters in the evening and fired at the German sentries. General Walter von Ungern, who was appointed commandant of Brest on July 30, when accepting the case, was forced to note: "In general, these are desert piles of ruins, smoking and fetid, where machine-gun fire was still being fired from the remaining Soviet soldiers."

On August 26, 1941, during a trip to the Eastern Front, the Brest Fortress was visited by A. Hitler, accompanied by Goering, Ribbentrop, Kesselring and guests - B. Mussolini and Chief of the Italian General Staff U. Cavaliere. The Fuhrer was shown captured equipment brought to the fortress. General Kluge, who accompanied the high delegation, told the history of the fortress and the details of its last assault. Hitler listened attentively to the story, and at the end he remarked: "Guderian did not in vain dissuade us from storming Brest. These ruins are not worth what the German army paid for them. It was enough to bypass the city and block the fortress with small forces. Aviation and artillery are the means against cities. The troops must strive forward, developing success in those areas where there are no Brest fortresses.

And this corresponded to the actions of the German troops in all directions in the summer of 1941. Soviet troops also did not seek to defend the city. Without a fight, a number of Baltic cities, Minsk, Lvov were surrendered to the Enemy ...

The defense of Odessa, in honor of which a special medal "For the Defense of Odessa" was cast, did not at all mean the conduct of defensive battles in this city itself. The area of Odessa was defended, and the city itself was actually

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was left without a fight. On August 8, Odessa was declared in a state of siege, the fighting on its outskirts began on August 10, and on September 30, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command allowed the evacuation of the Odessa defensive region. On October 16, the last ship left the port of Odessa, and the Romanian troops entered the city.

Nevertheless, the heroic defense of the Odessa defensive region became a bright page in the history of the Great Patriotic War. Over 29.5 thousand people were awarded the medal "For the Defense of Odessa". On May 1, 1945, by the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the city of Odessa was awarded the honorary title of Hero City.

At the end of July 1941, German troops approached Smolensk. The Soviet troops also did not defend this city and retreated to the east, organizing an artillery bombardment of Smolensk. An eyewitness to this, General Guderian, writes: "In the evening, under enemy artillery fire, I made my way through Smolensk to the command post of the group in Khokhlovo, located southwest of the city ... The city of Smolensk suffered little damage as a result of hostilities. Having captured the old part of the city on the southern bank of the Dnieper, the 29th motorized division, having the task of establishing contact with Goth (3rd tank group. - Author), crossed the Dnieper River and captured the industrial area of the city, located on the north bank of the river.

In early September 1941, continuing the offensive on the right wing of the Soviet-German front, German troops launched military operations for Dnepropetrovsk, which was defended by units of the 15th and 261st rifle divisions. The presence of stone factory buildings and stone buildings in the suburbs of Dnepropetrovsk, as well as the deep Samara River, which perpendicularly divided the zone of hostilities - all these circumstances determined the complex positional nature of the battles as a struggle

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but for separate small tactical items. Under these conditions, both sides, showing stubbornness, fought bloody and protracted battles with heavy losses. Now Dnepropetrovsk was abandoned by the Soviet troops without street fighting.

Then, on September 19, the city of Kyiv was abandoned by Soviet troops without a fight. True, the central part of this city, which consisted of stone buildings, was previously prepared by the Soviet troops for the explosion, which claimed the lives of many German soldiers and officers who found themselves in Kiev at that time.

For a long time, the Soviet leadership did not dare to promote the defense of Kyiv as an achievement of Soviet military art. But years passed, and the opinion gradually began to change. In 1961, the city of Kyiv was awarded the honorary title "Hero City" and a special medal "For the Defense of Kyiv" was established. This medal has been awarded to over 102,000 Human.

On October 4, the 4th Panzer Division of the 2nd Panzer Group captured Orel, which was an important railway and highway junction. Soviet troops were unable to organize the defense of this city. The commander of the 2nd Panzer Group, General Guderian, writes: "The capture of the city took place so unexpectedly for the enemy that when our tanks entered Orel, trams were still running in the city. The evacuation of industrial enterprises, which was usually carefully prepared by the Russians, could not be carried out. Starting from factories and factories to the railway station itself, machine tools and boxes with factory equipment and raw materials lay everywhere on the streets.

But the attempts of the command of the Army Group "Center" to seize Tula on the move were not successful. General Guderian writes: "October 29, our head tank units reached a point 4 km from Tula. An attempt to capture the city on the move ran into a strong

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anti-tank and air defense and ended in failure, and we suffered significant losses in tanks and officers ...

In view of the impossibility of taking Tula from the front, General Baron von Geyer proposed to bypass the city from the east. I agreed with this proposal."

Subsequent battles were fought in the vicinity of Tula. Attempts to capture the city itself were made by insignificant forces and in the overall picture of the hostilities of a special didn't matter.

For a long time, the feat of defending Tula was ignored by the Soviet leadership. Only in the 80s this city was awarded the honorary title of "Hero City".

In the following month, Soviet troops left a large number of cities and large settlements without a fight. The main forces of the Army Group "North" reached the approaches to Leningrad, the Army Group "Center" - rushed to Moscow, the Army Group "South" - moved through the Donbass in the direction of Rostov-on-Don.

On October 12, 1941, a secret directive was received by the commander of Army Group Center, signed by A. Hitler, which, in particular, stated:

"The Führer decided that the surrender of Moscow should not be accepted, even if it was offered by the enemy. The moral justification for this event is quite clear in the eyes of the whole world. Just as in Kyiv, our troops may face extreme dangers from delayed-action mines. Therefore, it is necessary to reckon to an even greater extent with the analogous situation in Moscow and Leningrad... It is necessary to keep in mind the serious danger of epidemics. Therefore, no German soldier should enter these cities.

Anyone who tries to leave the city and pass through our positions must be fired upon and
driven away

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back. Small open passages that provide an opportunity for a mass exodus of the population to inner Russia can only be welcomed. And for other cities there should be a rule that before being captured they should be destroyed by artillery shelling and air raids, and the population should be put to flight.

It would be completely irresponsible to risk the lives of German soldiers to save Russian cities from fires or to feed their population at the expense of Germany. The more the population of Soviet cities rushes into inner Russia, the more chaos will increase in Russia and the easier it will be to manage and use the occupied eastern regions ... "

A. Hitler retreated from his principles when his troops approached the large city of the Volga and the industrial center of Stalingrad. The Fuhrer ordered to take this city by storm. I.V. Stalin, in turn, ordered to defend the city bearing his name with all his might. The well-known order of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR No. 227 was issued, better known as the order "Not a step back", threatening execution by firing squad for retreat. The grandiose battle for Stalingrad began, which became one of the brightest pages of the Great Patriotic War and the entire Second World War.

Much has been written about Stalingrad. Various authors vividly describe individual battles; sections from the memoirs of many prominent military leaders are devoted to them. A book by historian Anthony Beevor was published, which became a bestseller in the USA, Great Britain and other countries of Western Europe.

On September 10, the 62nd Army retreated to the city with fighting. The defending Soviet troops entrenched themselves in stone and concrete buildings, which seemed to them to be good shelters from enemy fire.

The elevator became one of such centers of resistance. Describing the battle for the elevator, E. Beevor, in particular, writes:

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"A fierce battle unfolded in a huge granary, downstream of the river. The rapid advance of General Hoth's panzer corps cut off this natural Russian stronghold from the main forces. Soldiers of the 35th Guards Division, whose strength was already running out, defended the vault... The German artillery began to destroy the concrete structure...

By the evening of September 20, the Russians ran out of ammunition, both machine guns were destroyed. The Germans, on the contrary, received tank reinforcements. Because of the dust and smoke inside the elevator, nothing could be seen, the defenders could only shout to each other. Bursting into the vault, the Germans fired at the voice ... "

And a few below:

"The stubborn defense of the city center by the Russians cost the Germans a lot of losses. The garrisons of the Red Army, which consisted of soldiers from different divisions, fought to the death, despite hunger and thirst. A fierce battle unfolded in the department store building on Red Square, which served as the headquarters of the 1st Battalion of the 40th Guards Regiment. Another redoubt was a small warehouse. In a three-story building located not far from the warehouse, the Red Army soldiers held out for five days ...

The most serious achievement of the Germans was a breakthrough to the central pier. Now the German artillery could fire at the main crossings across the Volga... The main railway station changed hands fifteen times in five days. As a result, the German soldiers got only miserable ruins...

In Stalingrad itself, a new type of battle was born - in the ruins of residential buildings. Burnt tanks, cisterns, wire, shell boxes mixed with beds, lamps, and other household utensils... notebook with homework left by the child on the table.

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Having occupied an observation post somewhere on the top floor, the artilleryman-pillowcase settled down on a stool taken from the kitchen and, with the help of a periscope, began to look for targets. Unlike the gunners, the German infantry tried to avoid fighting in the ruins. They believed that close combat was contrary to all the rules of military art...

At the end of September, a fierce battle unfolded for the ruins of a large brick house on the banks of the Volga. The house had four floors on the side facing the river and three on the opposite side. It can be said that it was a layered cake: on the top floor - the Germans, on the floor below - the Russians, on the first floor - again the Germans. Often, the opponents could not even recognize each other, as their uniforms were completely covered in grayish brown.

dust.

The German generals, of course, could not predict what awaited their divisions in the destroyed city... Nevertheless, the 6th Army found an opportunity to further increase the pressure on the Russians, reviving the assault detachments, first used in January 1918. These detachments were groups of ten people who were armed with machine guns, flamethrowers and had a supply of quicklime to "clean" bunkers, cellars and sewer wells.

The German attack on the northern industrial area of the city, launched on September 27, met with fierce resistance. The Krasny Oktyabr, Traktorny and Barrikada factories turned into impregnable fortresses, the storming of which led to huge losses.

On October 10, German troops launched attacks against the defenders of the Graktorny and Barrikady factories. Fierce fighting broke out on 14 October. At 8 o'clock in the morning, after a powerful artillery and aviation preparation, two infantry and two tank divisions went on the offensive on a front of about 4 kilometers.

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The German troops struck the main blow in the direction of the tractor plant, which was defended by the troops of three rifle divisions (112th, 37th Guards and 308th). At 11:00 enemy infantry with 50 tanks broke through the defenses of the Soviet troops at the junction of the 112th and 37th Guards Rifle Divisions. The next day, fighting was already taking place on the territory of the tractor plant. Despite the fierce resistance of the Soviet troops, by the end of October 11, the German troops managed to capture the tractor plant and, in a strip of about 2.5 kilometers, reach the Volga in this direction.

Thus, the situation in the area of the Graktorny, Barrikady and Krasny Oktyabr plants was extremely unfavorable for the Soviet troops. The Soviet command was forced to send an additional 138th Rifle Division, Colonel I.I. Lyudnikov, whose units arrived there during September 16 and 17 and immediately joined the defense.

The division fought stubborn defensive battles on the occupied lines until October 20. The German command also continued its attacks, strengthening the grouping of its troops. At last, with strikes in the southern and eastern directions, the German troops succeeded in penetrating the division's defenses and advancing 200-300 kilometers. But this success came at a high price: over 800 corpses of soldiers and officers and 12 burnt tanks remained on the battlefield.

1] and on November 12, German troops launched an offensive along the entire defense zone of the 62nd Army. Particularly fierce fighting unfolded in the area of the Barrikady plant. By the end of November 1, they managed to overcome the defenses of the Soviet units and break through to the Volga in a sector 500 meters wide. In the following days, attacks continued in different directions, but none of them reached their goals. Bridgehead of the 138th Infantry Division of Colonel I.I. Ro

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dimipev, whose size was reduced to 700 meters along the front and 400 meters in depth, was never eliminated.

During the fighting in Stalingrad, both sides launched a real sniper war. Today it is difficult to say who started it and who was the winner. Hundreds of Soviet snipers operated in front of the German offensive front. Headhunting has become a kind of hobby. For every 40 Germans killed, a Soviet sniper received a medal "For Courage". The most famous Stalingrad sniper was Zaitsev, who by November 7 had killed 149 Germans.

The German offensive against Stalingrad failed. There were several reasons for this.

Firstly, huge losses in the ranks of the troops leading the offensive. By mid-November 1942, the headquarters of the 6th Army bitterly stated that the battalions had suffered losses of more than 40%, and most companies numbered no more than 50 people. Huge were the losses of German troops in tanks and other military equipment. The losses of the Soviet troops were also significant, but with amazing tenacity they were replenished at the expense of reserves, which were concentrated on the eastern bank of the Volga.

Secondly, the imperfection of the German tactics of street fighting affected. The German command came to the conclusion that it was necessary to act in assault groups, which included infantry, flamethrowers AND sappers. Tanks, as a rule, acted independently, field artillery was not introduced into the city, firing from closed firing positions located on its outskirts. All this often led to a violation of the interaction of forces and means, the low effectiveness of artillery fire and a decrease in the pace of the offensive.

Thirdly, the defensive stubbornness of the Soviet troops, the readiness of soldiers and officers to fight in any conditions, despite

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huge losses. The order to defend the city of Stalin to the last acted in the most direct and harsh form. Veterans said that people sent to Stalingrad from the left bank of the Volga mentally said goodbye to life, setting the task of selling it as dearly as possible. Therefore, once in the city, the fighters and commanders thought not about how to survive, but about combat, about inflicting losses on the enemy. Even people who had practically never been in battle rose up in bayonet attacks. The German soldiers called the defenders of Stalingrad crazy fanatics and, as a rule, retreated before it came to hand-to-hand combat.

In general, the defense of Stalingrad for the first time sharply post

Vila before both sides the question of the preparation and conduct of street fighting. The German command failed to solve this problem positively. The defending Soviet side was able to withstand the fierce blow of the enemy and resist in conditions that could not be compared with human forces. Not for nothing, in memory of these events and to distinguish Soviet soldiers, already at the end of December 1942, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR established a special medal "For the Defense of Stalingrad", which was awarded to more than 750 thousand people. May 1, 1945 Stalingrad was awarded the honorary title of "Hero City". Thus, at the beginning of the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War, the German command received a fairly rich experience in storming large cities and some experience in street fighting. However, this experience was partly one-sided. A number of cities surrendered to the enemy without

fight. Others - after massive air strikes and artillery shelling. Still others - after the establishment of a rigid blockade and the development of an offensive in depth. Frontal assaults on cities at that time were practically not carried out.

The first experience of a frontal assault on the city and street fighting was gained by German troops in Sta

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lingrad. But these battles showed, in general, the unpreparedness of the Wehrmacht to organize and conduct battles of this kind. I had to study on the spot and at the cost of great losses. Certain positive steps were taken to improve the tactics of street combat, the troops switched to operations in mixed assault groups, and sniper and mine warfare were widely developed. There were instructions for conducting combat in the city and special new means of armed struggle. But all this did not ensure the achievement of the desired result by the German command.

FIRST LESSONS

From the first days of fascist aggression, considerable difficulties were revealed in conducting an offensive battle in the city. The Soviet troops suffered heavy losses. Thus, during the battle for one of the administrative buildings in Smolensk on July 20, 1941, the irretrievable losses of the 480th Infantry Regiment from the fire of enemy machine guns installed in stone buildings and basements exceeded 80%.

The fact is that the offensive of rifle units in the city differed significantly from the offensive under normal conditions. This was primarily due to limited opportunities for the use of forces and means, limited visibility and shelling, disunity of units, management difficulties, and little room for maneuver. The fire of guns and tanks at the enemy, who was in stone buildings, was ineffective. The defense of the enemy was also characterized by a significant originality. Numerous stone buildings with armored cellars, factory and factory buildings made it easier for him to create a stable defense. In the streets, squares and gardens, barricades were set up behind ramparts. All quarters were preparing for all-round defense. The flanking and oblique fire was prepared by the appropriate arrangement of firepower along the streets and alleys. Houses were mined, prepared for an explosion in order to create blockages at crossroads. Artillery firing positions were usually located in the basements of large buildings and semi-basement

premises

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niyakh. Mortars were located at firing positions behind the high walls of houses. The battle formations of the enemy were characterized by a deep echeloning of forces and assets.

One of the first successful offensive operations of the Soviet troops to liberate the cities occupied by the Nazis was the operation of the 24th Army, as a result of which its formations captured Yelnya, an ancient Russian city (known since 1159), located on the Desna River, the regional center of the Smolensk region.

From the report of the Soviet Information Bureau of September 6, 1941:

"On the Smolensk direction, the battles for the city of Yolnya ended with the defeat of the SS division, 15, 137, 178, 292, 268th infantry divisions of the enemy Our troops occupied the city of Yolnya.

By the decision of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command, on July 30, the Reserve Front was formed (commander - General of the Army G.K. Zhukov, chief of staff - Major General P.I. Lyapin, since August 10 - Major General A.F. Anisov). He was given the task of destroying the Yelninsk grouping of the enemy, which numbered about 70 thousand soldiers and officers, 500 guns and mortars, about 40

tanks and posed a threat to the flanks and rear of the Soviet troops operating in the Vyazma direction.

The front headquarters, after a comprehensive study of the situation, developed a plan to defeat the fascist group, which was defending itself in the Yelnin ledge. The idea of the operation was to break through the enemy defenses with counter strikes from the north and south under the base of the ledge and, developing the offensive, encircle the main forces of the 20th Army Corps. At the same time, it was planned to cut the enemy grouping with a blow from the east and destroy it piece by piece.

Thus, given the configuration of the front line, the basis for the concept of the operation in the Yelnya area

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A decisive form of operational maneuver was introduced—two-sided encirclement with the aim of encircling and defeating the enemy piecemeal. The implementation of the operation was entrusted to the 24th Army (commander - Major General K.I. Rakutin, chief of staff - Major General A.K. Kondratiev).

General Rakutin, in pursuance of the operational directive of the front, after clarifying the task and assessing the situation on August 26, made a decision and assigned tasks to the formation commanders. It was envisaged to break through the enemy defenses with the forces of 9 divisions out of 13 available in the army (four divisions defended at the turn of the Uzha River). As part of these forces, there were about 60 thousand people, about 800 guns and mortars. Two strike groups consisting of 5 divisions were created - northern (two rifle and one tank divisions) and southern (rifle and motorized divisions).

The strike divisions were to deliver counter strikes under the base of the ledge in the general direction of Vys. Leonov to a depth of 10 kilometers. The decisive role in achieving the goal of the operation belonged to the northern strike group of rifle divisions. The 107th Rifle Division (commanded by Colonel P.V. Mironov) was reinforced by the 275th corps, 573rd cannon and 544th howitzer (minus one battalion) artillery regiments, two batteries of rocket launchers (BM-13). The division operated in a 4 km zone, breaking through the defenses in a 2 km sector. The 102nd Panzer Division (commanded by Colonel I.D. Illarionov) and the 100th Rifle Division (commanded by Major General I.N. Russiyanov) advanced respectively in bands up to 4 and 8 km, making a breakthrough in sections 1.5 and 2 km. In total, the northern group had about 400 guns and mortars.

The southern strike group, consisting of the 303rd rifle and 106th motorized divisions, received about 100 guns and mortars for reinforcement. The main role of the otvo

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of the 303rd Rifle Division (commanded by Colonel N.P. Rudnev), which was given: a rifle regiment from the 106th division, two divisions of the 488th corps artillery regiment, the 24th mortar battalion, a battery of rocket launchers installations (BM-13), and subsequently the 103rd separate tank battalion. It attacked in the 8 km zone, breaking through the defenses in the 3 km sector; The 106th motorized division (commander - Colonel A.N. Pervushin) had an offensive zone of about 10 km, a breakthrough section - 2 km.

An important role was assigned to the central group, which included the 19th (commander - Major General Ya.G. Kotelnikov) and 309th (commander - Colonel N.A. Ilyantsev) rifle divisions. They were supposed to, advancing from the east to Yelnya, cut the encircled troops into parts and, in cooperation with other divisions, destroy them. These formations had offensive zones up to 6 and 4 km wide, respectively, making a breakthrough in sections 3 and 2 km. However, to accomplish the assigned tasks, the forces and means in this group were clearly not enough. It consisted of only about 100 guns and mortars, and had no tanks at all.

Consequently, the ratio of forces was approximately equal: in people - 1.1: | in favor of the enemy, for artillery - 1.6:1 in favor of the 24th Army. Tanks on both sides were used to a limited extent. For the period of the operation, an artillery group was created in the army, which consisted of an army long-range group (ADD) and infantry support groups (PP) in divisions. Artillery preparation was planned to last one hour.

At 7 o'clock on August 30, the shock groups of the army rushed to the attack. The enemy fiercely resisted. In the next two days, the enemy launched six counterattacks, trying to prevent the development of the offensive and to keep the mouth of the Elnin ledge.

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Recalls Army General G.K. Zhukov:

"Our 19th, 100th and 107th divisions fought especially courageously. I saw from the observation post the divisional commander of the 107th division P.V. Mironov an unforgettable picture of the fierce battle of the infantry regiment commanded by I.M. Nekrasov. Polk I.M. Nekrasov quickly captured the village of Voloskovo, but was surrounded. He fought for three days. With the support of other units of the 107th division, artillery and aviation, the regiment not only broke through the encirclement, but also crushed the opposing enemy, while capturing an important stronghold - the railway station..."

The turning point came as four aviation regiments advanced at the disposal of the commander of the front troops, who immediately began to provide fire support to the attackers. The commander of the troops of the front handed over to the commander of the army two regiments of the arriving reinforcements, which struck at the enemy in the zone of the 100th division. In the zone of the 102nd Panzer Division, by decision of General K.I. Rakutin, a regiment of the 127th Infantry Division, which was defending on the Uzha River, was brought into battle.

The successful offensive of the army units continued. The days of the Elninsk ledge were numbered. And Hitler still consoled himself with the hope of turning the tide of events. He sends Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch, Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces, to Army Group Center. The commander-in-chief flies, accompanied by his chief of staff, Franz Halder, who then records in his diary:

"September 2, 1941 of the year. 73rd day of the war.

8.00-18.00. Departure together with the commander-in-chief to the headquarters of Army Group Center. As a result of the discussion, it was concluded that it was necessary to abandon holding the arc of the front near Yelnya. Army Group Commander

(Field Marshal von Bock) reports heavy losses in personnel.

In confirmation of von Bock's report, Halder, in his diary entry dated September 3, cites the figures of total losses for the period from June 22 to August 31, 1941: "10,080 officers were wounded, 292,741 non-commissioned officers and privates; killed - 4000 officers, 83483 non-commissioned officers and privates; missing - 371 officers, 19317 non-commissioned officers and privates. Total 409998 people. The total loss figure is 11.05% of the average number of ground forces on the Eastern Front, which is equal to 3.78 million people.

By the end of the day on September 3, the northern and southern groups had narrowed the neck of the Elninsk ledge to six to eight kilometers. General Rakutin informs the front headquarters: the 10th tank, 17th motorized and 15th infantry divisions of the enemy, the Fuhrer regiment from the SS division Reich, have been defeated. The command of Army Group Center introduces new infantry divisions into battle - 157th, 178th, 268th, 292nd. The fighting on the flanks was especially fierce. This is understandable: the enemy tried with all his might to prevent the final compression of the neck of the ledge, to avoid encirclement. To increase the pace of the offensive, the army commander commits his reserve, the 6th militia division, which had previously been redeployed to the Dorogobuzh region, into battle. She launched an offensive north of Yelnya. First

the 1293rd Rifle Regiment under the command of Colonel N.A. Ogloblin. Overcoming the stubborn resistance of the enemy, he went to the village of Kostino. Here his soldiers repulsed four counterattacks of the Nazis - Tsev, then they themselves rushed to the attack, put them to flight And occupied the southern approaches to Yoelna. The 1297th regiment fought to the west of this regional center.

September 5th. 76th day of the war. From the diary of F. Halder: "Our units surrendered to the enemy the arc of the front near Yelnya."

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"Indeed, the battalion of the 688th motorized regiment of the 103rd rifle division from the dawn of September 5 under the command of Captain N.I. Shcherbakova reached the northwestern outskirts of the city. By the end of that day, the 100th Rifle Division occupied Chaptsovo (north of Yelny), and the 19th Rifle Division broke into Yolnya from the southeast. "Your order to defeat the Yelninskaya enemy grouping and capture the city of Yolnya has been fulfilled," G.K. Zhukov to the Supreme Commander. A significant lesson was dealt to five fascist divisions. Their losses in manpower amounted to 45 thousand people.

The liberation of Yelnya enriched the experience of the Soviet troops in combat operations in the city. Characteristically, already at the end of September, the General Staff developed and published the "Instruction for conducting combat in a populated area."

On September 7, in honor of the victory near Yelnya, the commander of the Reserve Front G.K. Zhukov issued an order in which, in particular, he wrote:

"In fierce battles with the Nazi troops, the fighters, commanders and political workers of the 24th Army showed high standards of valor, courage and fearlessness. The glorious red warriors heroically defended the honor and freedom of our Motherland, and in fact showed their selfless devotion to the Soviet people. The brilliant victory won by units of the 24th Army inspires the entire Red Army, the entire Soviet people to new exploits in the struggle for the complete defeat and destruction of the hated enemy. The experience of a number of battles once again shows the absolute superiority of our Red Army over the German fascist army... The Military Council of the Front congratulates you on your brilliant victory and calls for new military exploits."

It is quite natural that the attention of the journalistic corps was riveted to Yelna. Here is what the English journalist A. Werth wrote: "This week,

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THE OPINION OF THE OPERATION IN THE YELNYA REGION

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9 The outgoing fall of the troops: on 31.8.1941

dated September 3, 1941, May September 6, 1941, September 8, 1941

Elninskaya operation (31.08-8.09.41)

living in the Smolensk region, had an encouraging effect on me to a certain extent, but at the same time left the impression of a tragedy. Historically, it was one of the oldest Russian lands, almost the very heart of the ancient

Russia... The whole completely destroyed territory of the Elninsk ledge, where all the cities and villages were destroyed, and the few surviving inhabitants huddled in cellars and dugouts, was tragic. And yet this was not just the first victory of the Red Army over the Germans, but also the first piece of land in all of Europe - some 150-200 square kilometers, perhaps - recaptured from the Nazi Wehrmacht.

The city of Mikhailov was the first to be liberated — an ancient fortification of the 18th century, located on the Pronya River. It was a rather rare case when the troops entered the battle on the move, without occupying their starting position. Making such a decision, the commander of the 10th Army, Lieutenant General F.I. Golikov tried to achieve maximum surprise. Having received data from intelligence that the city was defending up to the regiment of the 10th motorized division, located in separate small garrisons with minimal security, General F.I. Golikov set the task of capturing the city with the advancing 328th and 330th rifle divisions, as well as the tank battalion devoted to the 330th rifle division.

At 19:00 on December 6, the commander of the 330th Rifle Division, Colonel G.D. Sokolov decided (reporting to the army commander), without waiting for the approach of the 328th Infantry Division, to seize the city of Mikhailov by storm with a surprise attack on the night of December 7. By his decision, the 1113th Rifle Regiment, reinforced by a group of tanks and one artillery battalion, was given the task of attacking Mikhailov from the east; The 1111th Rifle Regiment, also reinforced with tanks and an artillery battalion, should advance on the city from the north; The 1109th Rifle Regiment with reinforcement units attacked from the northwest in order to cut off the enemy's escape routes to the southwest. At 8 p.m. on December 6, the 1111th and 1113th regiments, having reconnaissance ahead and groups of sappers,

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cleared minefields, unnoticed by the enemy concentrated 4 km from Mikhailov. At night, reconnaissance was carried out, the routes of movement of units were clarified, and signals of interaction were assigned. Artillery and mortars were set up in advance prepared positions.

At 24:00 on December 6, artillery suddenly opened fire on the enemy, after artillery preparation, the infantry quickly went on the attack. The demoralized enemy guards began to retreat to the city, which allowed the Soviet units to quickly approach its outskirts. To find them, the Nazis set fire to the outermost houses on the northern outskirts of the city, and stacks of straw on the eastern outskirts of the city with incendiary shells of anti-tank guns. Subdivisions of the 1111th Rifle Regiment, advancing under fire, had to crawl across the space. Artillery, being in combat formations of the infantry, destroyed enemy firing points with direct fire. Already by 2 o'clock on December 7, units of the division broke into the outskirts of the city, so the enemy could not open artillery fire on them, as he was afraid to fire on his troops. Panic began in the ranks of the enemy. This facilitated the defeat of Mikhailov's garrison. The broken remnants of the enemy fled to the southwest.

By 7 am on December 7, the city of Mikhailov was completely occupied by units of the 330th Infantry Division. At 8 o'clock on December 7, the 1105th rifle regiment of the 328th rifle division approached the southern outskirts of the city. The enemy left on the battlefield only killed up to 250 soldiers and officers. The division captured 550 vehicles, over 30 guns and many other military property. Achieving a surprise attack on the enemy and skillful actions of the troops at night decided the success of this battle. It should be noted the reasonable initiative of the commander of the 330th division, who, instead of an auxiliary task (with

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actions of the 328th division in the capture of Mikhailovo) carried out the main one - he liberated the city.

At the same time, south of Dmitrov and northwest of Moscow, Soviet troops also pushed back the weakened enemy and by December 11 advanced to the line of Istra. As a result, the enemy command was forced to withdraw the main forces of the 3rd Panzer Group to the Klin, Solnechnogorsk, Istra Reservoir, and Istra lines. At this point, the enemy command, trying to retain the Moscow-Leningrad railway, decided to stop the advance of the Soviet troops.

However, overcoming enemy resistance, the troops of the 30th Army (commanded by Major General D.D. Lelyushenko) on December 14 came close to the outskirts of Klin from the north and northeast, and the troops of the 1st Shock Army (commander - Lieutenant General V.I. Kuznetsov), having liberated Yakhroma on December 8, by December 14 they reached the area southwest of Klin. Thus, the grouping of Nazi troops in the Klin area found itself in a very difficult situation. The question of the defense of Klin arose sharply.

But in fact, according to German experts, this city, which almost completely consisted of wooden and adobe buildings, could not become a major defense center on the path of the Soviet offensive. Nevertheless, they tried to organize the defense of the city, based on the existing stone buildings and fortifying its outskirts.

The liberation of the city of Klin is recalled by the commander of the 30th Army, General D.D. Lelyushenko:

"Immediately after midnight on December 14, our army, having consolidated battle formations in the strike direction, again went on the offensive with all its might. Two hours later, the 1233rd Infantry Regiment of Colonel V.I. Reshetov from the 371st Infantry Division, supported by the 930th

Tillerian regiment of Major B.P. Besedinsky, broke into Klin from the northeast. Half an hour later, the 348th Rifle Division reached the southeastern outskirts of the city. The 1172nd Infantry Regiment of Major I.P. Zakharov, then - the 24th Cavalry, commanded by Colonel A.F. Miracles, and naval brigades of the 1st shock army.

All night the battle went on for this important junction of highways and railways. The tank brigades, together with the motorized and motorcycle regiments, closed the ring around the Klin group of the Nazis, cutting the highway leading to the west, and reached the enemy's rear communications. The enemy fell into a trap. The battlefield was littered with the corpses of Nazi soldiers and officers. Abandoned guns, tanks, motor vehicles were visible everywhere in the deep snow.

During the attack on Klin, our aviation made about 2,000 sorties and inflicted huge losses on the enemy. On December 14, the squadron commander of the 521st Fighter Aviation Regiment of the 43rd Air Division, Captain Kleshchev, destroyed three enemy Yu-87 aircraft at the airfield. Then he met in the air with seven enemy fighters. He boldly entered into battle with them, shot down two and returned to his base on a damaged aircraft.

A fierce battle for Klin went on for a day. The Nazis tried to break out of the encirclement, fought with the tenacity of the doomed, but their attempts were in vain! They could no longer influence the course of events. By the morning of December 15, Soviet troops had completely cleared Klin.

Avoiding complete annihilation, on the night of December 15, part of the enemy forces hastily began to retreat to the west. On December 15, at 2 o'clock, the troops of the 30th Army entered Klin and completed the defeat of the enemy units that fell into the operational encirclement. Aviation played a significant role in defeating the Klin group. She nano

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force strikes against strongholds, retreating troops and disrupted the rear of the enemy. The defeat of the Klin grouping of the enemy was of great importance for the development of the offensive of all the armies of the right wing of the Western Front.

Stubborn battles unfolded in the Solnechnogorsk direction. Here the 20th Army struck in the area of Krasnaya Polyana. The fighting for this settlement began on December 4, 1941 and lasted for several days. The Krasnopolyansk center of resistance covered Solnechnogorsk from the southeast. As a result of strikes by the 331st Rifle Division and the 28th Rifle Brigade, the enemy garrison was driven out of Krasnaya Polyana ON THE NIGHT OF December 8, 1941. Solnechnogorsk was bypassed on impassable roads and forests from the west and south. This maneuver was unexpected for the enemy and ended in success for the Soviet troops. On December 11, the 31st Tank Brigade (the forward detachment of the 20th Army) and the 64th Rifle Brigade, energetically pursuing the retreating enemy units, captured Solnechnogorsk on the move. Pursued by units of the 20th and 1st shock armies, the Nazi troops retreated behind the Istra reservoir.

Thus, during the Battle of Moscow, Soviet troops once again encountered difficulties associated with the preparation and conduct of battle for large settlements, turned by the enemy into centers of resistance. Frontal attacks on these settlements, as a rule, did not give significant results and led to heavy losses. More effective were operations based on the bypass and blockade of settlements, followed by an assault on the latter. At the same time, artillery and aviation preparation for the assault on the city, as well as the correct actions of troops on its streets, acquired particular importance.

STORM OF GREAT BOWS

On November 29, 1942, around the city of Velikiye Luki, the encirclement of about 8-9 thousand German soldiers and officers was completed, armed with 100-120 artillery pieces of various systems, 10-15 tanks and assault guns.

The system of the Velikie Luki defense center included not only the city itself, but also a number of surrounding settlements. The main one was a solid line of defense, which passed along the settlements of Zentsy, Kuryanikha, Gnilka, Shutova, Aligrodovo, Novo-Selenovo, Tarashchanka, Mishneva-Bovo, Bezmyanny and the state farm Bogdanovsky, adjoining the city outskirts and the railway junction. All these settlements were adapted for all-round defense and were connected with each other by fire. In addition to firing points equipped in various buildings, there were many dugouts and bunkers with a cover of 2-3 runs of logs 30-40 cm thick. From the northwest, all approaches to Velikie Luki were covered by a stronghold located at a height - rampart above the surrounding area, from the south - the village of Nikulino and the Bogdanovsky state farm, located on a hill and also turned into strongholds. The bunkers withstood a direct hit by 152 mm shells, and the trenches in the trenches for the shooters were protected by armor plates. Defensive structures were supplemented by a large number of minefields and wire fences.

Inside the city of Velikiye Luki, a fortress, a railway junction,
and so

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as well as tactically advantageous large stone buildings - churches, factories, factories, schools, baths, and some residential buildings. All basements in these buildings were

equipped to accommodate guns and mortars. The corner houses were turned into blockhouses, and the adjacent streets were fired from. In the attics of high-rise buildings and churches, observation posts and machine-gun nests were equipped. The head of the garrison was the commander of the 277th Infantry Regiment of the 83rd Infantry Division, Lieutenant Colonel von Zass.

The 257th, 357th, and 7th (Estonian) Rifle Divisions of the 3rd Shock Army of the Kalinin Front were concentrated near Velikiye Luki in mid-December to storm the city. Two more Estonian rifle divisions from the 8th Estonian rifle corps (commander Major General L.A. Peri) were in the army reserve. The army commander was General K.N. Galitsky.

To destroy the Velikoluksky garrison, the Soviet command decided to inflict two blows. The main one - from the northwest and west - in order to split the enemy forces into parts, the 257th and 357th rifle divisions were supposed to strike. Auxiliary - from the south - one regiment of the 7th rifle division. It was decided to start the assault on December 12th. For the assault on the 257th Rifle Division, 10 T-34 tanks, a mortar regiment, and two batteries of a cannon artillery regiment (a total of 154 guns and mortars of 76mm caliber and above) were attached. The 357th rifle regiment received 12 T-34 tanks and 3 KV tanks, three artillery battalions (202 guns and mortars) for reinforcement. The 7th Rifle Division was armed with 179 guns and mortars. It is difficult to judge the number of personnel of the Soviet troops who participated in the assault on Velikiye Luki. But it is known that only the 7th Rifle Division consisted of about 10 thousand people, and the entire 8th Estonian Rifle Corps - 37.3 thousand people.

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In addition, an army artillery group was deployed to storm the city, consisting of two cannon artillery battalions (18 guns) and nine Katyusha battalions. In total, the artillery group of troops intended to capture the city consisted of 566 guns and mortars.

Thus, during the assault on Velikiye Luki, the Soviet troops outnumbered the German troops by about 5-6 times in terms of personnel, 2.5 times in tanks, and at least 5 times in the number of guns and mortars. It was quite possible to attack, according to the theory of military art, with such a balance of forces and means.

Before the start of the infantry and tank offensive, it was decided to carry out artillery preparation and air bombing strikes within 2 hours and 15 minutes. The offensive of the troops is to be supported by ground attack aircraft. The offensive was carried out by assault groups, which were supposed to include tanks.

But the plans of the Soviet command, due to continuous fog, had to be changed and the start of the offensive was postponed to December 13th. But the morning of December 13 also turned out to be foggy. But this time they decided not to postpone the offensive.

At 12 o'clock the final powerful fire raid of all artillery began, after which it transferred the fire to the depth of the enemy's defense. Tanks went on the attack, each of which dragged behind them a trailer with troops (heavy sleds with double wooden shields arranged on them, between which stones and sand were densely stuffed). In the sleigh behind the shields, which protected from bullets, fragments of shells and mines, infantrymen and machine gunners hid. The assault detachments moved forward behind the tanks, then the main forces of the attacking battalions.

At first, the attackers moved quickly. But soon, due to the intensified return fire of the enemy, the advance slowed down. It immediately became clear that as a result of the artillery preparation carried out, it was not successful.

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It was necessary to completely destroy the German defenses, which consisted of barbed wire, minefields, ditches and scarps, bunkers and dugouts. Some of them had to

take by storm after the approach of the assault groups.

When the attackers reached the city and started street fighting, the pace of advance of the Soviet troops slowed down even more. In addition to assault squads, rifle companies had to be brought into battle. There was a fight on every street, practically for every house. The Germans managed to knock out several tanks. In some places they even turned into counterattacks reinforced by tanks. Knocked out of the buildings, the Germans immediately took up defensive positions in the trenches with which they dug the entire city in advance and which served as shelters and communication channels for them. There were many cases when the same objects changed hands several times. Hand-to-hand fights broke out, bayonets and hand grenades were used.

By the evening of December 13, one of the regiments of the 357th Infantry Division managed to break through to the Lovat River and capture the bridge. But the enemy was able to return the bridge with counterattacks. After that, the Soviet soldiers organized a new attack and again captured the bridge. Within a short time, the bridge changed hands several times, and only by nightfall was it secured by the troops of the 357th Rifle Division, who captured a small bridgehead on the eastern bank of the river.

On that day, units of the 7th Estonian Rifle Division, having also launched an offensive against the enemy on a wide front of 18 kilometers, captured the settlement of Bozhno and reached the approaches to the settlements of Novo-Selenovo, Tarashchanka and Bogdanovsky.

Thus, on the first day of the assault, some success was achieved. The 257th Infantry Division completed its task in full. The actions of the 257th and 7th Estonian rifle divisions were somewhat

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completed. The first revealed the insufficient training of the assault detachments and poor interaction between them. The second was unable to qualitatively organize the offensive, primarily in terms of the effectiveness of artillery preparation, as a result of which a number of enemy firing points were not suppressed. The army artillery group did not work in the best way, which did not fulfill the fire tasks assigned to it.

The absence of a unified command of all the troops that carried out the assault on Velikiye Luki also had a negative impact. The army commander with an offensive front of 180 kilometers was forced to divert his attention to other directions, as a result of which decisions during the assault were not made promptly. Meanwhile, the enemy stubbornly tried to unblock the encircled garrison with strikes from outside.

On December 14, the battles for Velikiye Luki flared up with renewed vigor. Clearing the enemy from street after street, quarter after quarter, by the end of the day, the assault detachments had captured almost the entire left-bank part of the city, with the exception of the fortress. Some assault detachments were able to overcome the river and expand the bridgehead on its right bank. So, the 948th Infantry Regiment of the 257th Infantry Division took over the building of the winery.

In the evening of the same day, it was decided to send parliamentarians to the commander of the enemy garrison with a proposal to stop hostilities at 2 p.m. the next day. But from the morning of December 15, the fighting continued with the same ferocity. Exactly at the appointed time, the shooting from the Soviet side was stopped and the truce went to the fortress. But the commandant of the German garrison categorically refused to capitulate. Later it became known that it was on this day that Hitler ordered the garrison of Velikiye Luki to defend to the last, by radio, promising help.

3rd I am Assaults of the Great Patriotic War

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The course of hostilities during the assault on Velikiye Luki (13-31.12.42)

The fighting resumed with renewed vigor. The Fuhrer personally followed their progress. In order to raise the spirit of the defenders, not only was an ambulance announced, but the most distinguished soldiers and officers were awarded with Iron Crosses and "Ostmedals". Many of them were promised a vacation after the tense situation was lifted. The head of the garrison, Lieutenant Colonel von Zass, was awarded the Knight's Cross, which was delivered to him in Velikie Luki by a special plane, and received a promise that after the end of the fighting the city would be named his name.

The Fuhrer's promises had a certain force. A grouping of German troops tried to break through to Velikiye Luki from the southwest and even pushed back a little.

troops of the 3rd shock army dropping there. But the command of the front, by reinforcing the army troops in this direction with several rifle divisions and the 36th tank brigade, averted the threat of a deeper breakthrough. The enemy was stopped at a distance of only 8 kilometers from the city.

The fighting in the city continued. The 249th Estonian Rifle Division and the 47th Mechanized Brigade were sent there additionally. Taking into account the losses of the German troops, the balance of forces in favor of the Soviet command increased even more. After the weather improved in the air Soviet aviation dominated.

A new phase of the offensive was launched on 25 December. At 13:00, after artillery preparation, the infantry went on the attack. Tanks with fire and caterpillars paved the way for her. Artillerymen ensured the defeat of the identified targets, firing direct fire.

On December 28, units of the 257th Rifle Division broke into the northern and central parts of the city. By the same time, the 47th mechanized brigade came out to the center, advancing from the south. By evening, only four blocks separated the brigade from the forward units of the 257th Infantry Division. The enemy defended stubbornly, from time to time turning into counterattacks. The battle was for every building and every floor.

The struggle took on the most fierce character in the last days of 1942, on December 30 and 31. Pressed from three sides, the remnants of the German garrison slowly retreated from the city center to the east, to the railway junction, where fortifications were prepared in advance and which the Units of the 7th Estonian Division could not occupy during all this time. The 257th Rifle Division and the 47th Mechanized Brigade finally "completely captured the city center, capturing more than

300 prisoners. The 357th Rifle Division finished off the remnants of the enemy in the southwestern part of the city, continuing to block its units that had settled in the fortress. 249th and

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The 7th Estonian Rifle Division captured the southern and southeastern outskirts. Thus, by the end of December 31, the city was occupied by Soviet troops, with the exception of the fortress and the area of the railway junction, which became key points of its defense.

After that, an attempt was again made to turn to the German commandant of the Velikiye Luki garrison with a proposal to surrender. There was no answer.

On January 1, 1943, the commander of the 3rd shock army ordered the destruction of the remnants of the German garrison in Velikie Luki. K. On January 3, the soldiers of the 47th mechanized brigade could hardly take possession of the station building and the station buildings, and on January 4 they started fighting for the pumping station and the rest of the railway station. Parts of the 7th Estonian division also approached there. The ring tightened ever tighter around a small group of Germans defending themselves in the area of the railway station and the locomotive depot.

From the dawn of January 4, the enemy resumed attempts to break through to Velikiye Luki from the southwestern direction. Up to two infantry regiments with 50 tanks were thrown into battle. Their blow fell on the regiment of the 360th rifle division, which at that time had only about 400 fighters in the ranks. Unable to withstand this blow, the regiment retreated 3 kilometers. The enemy also managed to encircle one of the battalions of another regiment of this division.

The army commander ordered that the 33rd tank brigade be urgently sent to the threatened direction and deployed before dawn behind the battle formations of the 360th rifle division. Representative of the Stavka G.K. Zhukov, who was sent to coordinate the actions of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts, which were supposed to break the blockade of Leningrad. He ordered the front commander, General M.A. to strengthen Purkaeva

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army K.N. Galitsky with one or two more divisions at the expense of neighboring armies.

"We will not attack the enemy ourselves," Zhukov decided. "In this way, we will only use up our reserves, and the enemy, in response to our strike, will put up a strong barrier and will break through in another place. Therefore, it is necessary to place both reserves and units taken from other sectors in echelon formation in front of the front of the advancing German divisions. Let them break themselves against our defenses. In this case, their losses will be incomparably greater. Yes, and they can't break into the city like that. And we must finish with the remnants of the German garrison ... "

In the second half of January 5, German troops pressed back a few more units of the 360th Infantry Division and broke into the village of Borshchanka. The enemy was stopped, but the village was not returned. At that time, the Soviet command became aware of the arrival of the new 331st German infantry division near Velikie Luki, which was visited by the commander of Army Group Center, Field Marshal von Kluge, and personally set the task of breaking through no later than January 10 to the city and release the encircled grouping there.

Commander of the 3rd Shock Army. decided to withdraw the 47th mechanized brigade to the northwestern part of the city and deploy it with the front to the west. At the same time, two regiments of the 357th Infantry Division took up defense on the southwestern outskirts of the city, using fortifications previously recaptured from the Germans. Thus, the grouping of forces and means in the direction of the expected enemy strike was significantly strengthened. In the next four days, despite the arrival of fresh forces, all enemy attacks from the west with the aim of deblocking Velikie Luki were repulsed.

On January 10, General of the Army G.K. Zhukov, who decided to take over command of the troops for the final

the current stage of the operation for Velikiye Luki. Together with the army commander, he went to the headquarters of the 357th rifle division, where he heard the decision of its commander to storm the fortress.

"The plan is good," approved G.K. Zhukov. - Of course, there is a share of risk in it, but one cannot do without risk. How do you prepare for the assault?

The regiment commander reported that assault groups had been created, which included sappers. Before the start of the attack, a squadron of stormtroopers will attack the fortress. All personnel are instructed on the procedure and have undergone some training.

- How long will it take to prepare? Zhukov asked.

"Four days," the division commander replied timidly.

- Fine. Let them prepare to storm the fortress. And you, army commander, pay attention to repelling an attack from outside," he advised Galitsky.

For two days, fierce battles were fought on the outer front of the encirclement. The enemy managed, striking from the southwest, to occupy the villages of Kopytovo and Lipenka. As a result, the distance separating it from Velikiye Luki was reduced to 3.5-4 kilometers. By the end of January 12, the German offensive in this direction was stopped. But the fighting here did not subside for another two days.

In these days, an event occurred that the former commander of the 3rd shock army, General K.N. Galitsky in his book "Years of Severe Trials" calls it a gamble. The German command, not abandoning the idea of a breakthrough to Velikiye Luki, formed a special detachment consisting of 20 tanks from the remnants of the 8th Panzer Division. Having painted crosses on the armor of these tanks and drawn stars, placing three captured Soviet tanks in front of the column, they began their "adventure" in the evening of January 13 near the village of Malenka. Hiding behind a smoke screen and taking advantage of the regrouping of Soviet troops, they did not

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opening fire rushed to the city. A special tank detachment managed to slip through the battle formations of the 360th rifle division, but they were noticed by the soldiers of the 357th rifle division, which was behind the first and took up defense on the outskirts of the city. The fight has begun. 12 enemy tanks were knocked out, but the tanks nevertheless broke through into the city and entered the fortress.

"It is difficult to say what the enemy wanted to achieve by doing this," writes K.N. Galitsky. - Warm up the spirit of the remnants of von Zass's units or give the Goebbels press the opportunity to trumpet about the "union" of the deblocking troops with the Velikiye Luki garrison. After all, he couldn't count on more."

Undoubtedly, the deblockade of Velikiye Luki failed in the full sense of the word. But the sudden tank breakthrough of the enemy testified to many things. If this was done by Soviet tankers, it would be called a successful military trick and an unparalleled feat, of course, the heroic deed of the German tankers was regarded as a senseless adventure.

K. Tippelskikh later wrote: "With great difficulty, at the cost of huge losses... the German divisions managed to drive a wedge 10 kilometers deep and 3 kilometers wide into the defense of the Russian covering forces. On January 12, their main units, completely exhausted and bloodless, stopped, not having reached only 3 kilometers to the western outskirts of the city.

Thus, as a result of a month of bloody battles, the German troops succeeded, gradually gnawing through the defenses of the Soviet troops at an average rate of about 400 meters per day, on a narrow

in a section up to 3 kilometers wide, advance to a depth of 10-12 kilometers and reach the near approaches to Velikie Luki. At the same time, the enemy strike force was constantly under the threat of flank strikes, but the Soviet command, for some reason, did not undertake these strikes. Moreover, a small group of tanks is still lucky

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Street fighting in Velikiye Luki

elk to break into the besieged fortress, strengthening and raising the morale of its garrison.

The time has come to storm the Velikolukskaya fortress and destroy the remnants of the German garrison, which continued to defend itself in the area of the railway station.

The fortress was an ancient stone building located in the western part of the city on a hill. Around the fortress stretched an earthen rampart, consisting of two tiers. The first of them, which served as a basis for the second, had a height of up to 11 meters with an inclination of 50-70 degrees. The second, equally steep, towered another 10 meters above the platform of the first. Along its crest there were trenches with rifle cells and machine-gun nests. Inside the fortress, on an area of 200 by 350 meters, several stone buildings were located: a church, a prison, three residential

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Houses. In their cellars, the defenders of the fortress took refuge during the bombing and artillery shelling.

The first attempt to storm the fortress was made by part of the forces of the 357th Rifle Division, reinforced by 7 tanks on January 3rd. The attack began at 15 o'clock after artillery preparation, but was not successful. Nevertheless, two heavy KV tanks managed to break into the fortress. But since the infantry was cut off by rifle and machine-gun fire, the tanks retreated to their original positions.

Three hours later, the second attack on the fortress began. This time only one heavy tank broke through the ramparts. The infantry was again cut off. But this time the tank was hit, caught fire, after which it was sent to the lake inside the fortress, where it sank along with the crew.

After that, the Soviet command did not dare to storm the fortress for 12 days. A new assault on the fortress began only on January 15 at 1] o'clock in the morning. By that time, intelligence managed to open all enemy firing points. Immediately before the attack, a 25-minute artillery preparation was carried out and a bomb assault was delivered.

The shelling of the Velikoluksky fortress before the assault

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"Ampulomers" were also used - a consolidated company consisting of 17 calculations. From an inclined pipe mounted on a sled, the compressed gas pushed out a glass ampoule with a combustible mixture, which flew along a steep trajectory over a distance of 300-350 meters. Breaking when falling, the ampoule created a small fire. In total, 1620 ampoules were fired at the fortress within two hours.

But even after such a powerful fire impact, the garrison of the fortress continued to defend itself. The attacks of the Soviet troops from the west and from the south were not successful. Only from the east did one of the assault detachments manage to break into the fortress. Additional forces were sent there. Soviet artillerymen were able to drag guns onto the ramparts of the fortress and opened fire on the fortifications with direct fire. Ampoule throwers also joined the gunners. Under the cover of these means, assault groups from other directions were able to penetrate the fortress at noon.

The remnants of the fortress garrison, retreating into stone buildings, continued to resist. The battle lasted until dawn on January 16 and only around 7 o'clock in the morning began to subside. A red flag was raised over the Velikoluksky fortress. 336 killed enemy soldiers and officers were found in the fortress, 235 people were taken prisoner. 9 tanks, guns, mortars and other military property were also seized. The author of the book "modestly" keeps silent about the losses of the Soviet troops during the storming of the fortress.

The assault on the enemy defenses in the station area began on January 14 simultaneously from all sides. Units of the 257th Rifle Division were advancing on Kiryanikha from the west. The enemy was defending himself here in the ruins of private houses and had several bunkers. Parts of the 7th and 249th Estonian Rifle Divisions advanced from the northeast and south. On January 15, the suburb of Kiryanikha, the locomotive depot and the building of the railway station were captured.

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la. But to achieve complete success on this day, the Soviet troops could not.

The decisive day was January 16th. At 12 noon, the 7th Estonian Rifle Division captured the building of the city hospital located near the railway station, where, according to K.N. Galitsky, more than 600 enemy soldiers and officers. At the same time, the 249th Estonian Rifle Division occupied the last German fortifications in the area of the railway depot, capturing 260 people.

But even after that, the last point of defense remained at the disposal of the enemy - a concrete basement surrounded by bunkers, located several hundred meters east of the railway station. In it, with a small group of soldiers and officers, was the commandant of the fortress, Lieutenant Colonel von Zass.

To destroy the last center of enemy resistance, a special assault detachment consisting of 30 infantrymen and sappers with an artillery battery was created as part of the 249th Estonian Rifle Division. The attack began at noon on 16 January. Several firing points were destroyed and 8 people were taken prisoner. But it was not possible to destroy the last center of resistance of the enemy. The Germans who were in the basement did not want to give up.

It was decided to install two powerful explosive charges on the roof of the basement, which were detonated one after the other at 15:30. Only after that the remnants of the German garrison of Velikie Luki capitulated. From the dilapidated basement, 52 stunned and wounded soldiers and officers were taken, led by commandant von Zass. After the war, the former commandant was hanged on the central square of Velikiye Luki by the verdict of the Soviet court.

Thus, the troops of the 3rd shock army fought for the capture of the city of Velikiye Luki for more than two and a half months - from November 20, 1942 to January 16

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1943, in the conditions of a significant superiority of the Soviet troops in forces and means. But repeated attempts to storm the city failed for various reasons, primarily because of the resilience of its garrison and attempts to unblock the encircled. The fighting in the city itself was also fierce and took a long time. As a result of these battles, the city of Velikiye Luki was taken by Soviet troops. According to archival data, during the fighting, more than 5 thousand were destroyed and 4 thousand enemy soldiers and 80 officers were captured, as well as 113 guns, 87 mortars, 20 tanks and assault guns, and many other trophies were captured.

The struggle for Velikie Luki became one of the first examples of the battles of the Soviet troops for a heavily fortified city. Later, these battles were called the "Battle of Stalingrad in miniature" and entered the Soviet annals of the Great Patriotic War as one of the successful operations. For heroism and courage shown in the Velikolukskaya operation, more than 10 thousand fighters and

mandirs were awarded high government awards. 57th Rifle Division was renamed

guards.

COMPLETING THE LIBERATION OF THE HOMELAND

After the successful completion of the Battles of Stalingrad and Kursk, Soviet troops began fighting for the liberation of the territory temporarily occupied by the enemy, rushing to the Dnieper. In the reports of the Information Bureau, the names of the liberated cities and large settlements sounded daily. Many of them could be captured only after a special operation, or even an assault. As a result of the fighting, Velikie Luki, Voronezh, Kursk, Belgorod, Orel, Krasnodar, Novocherkassk, Rostov-on-Don, Chernigov, Vyazma, Kharkov, Donetsk, Poltava, Kremenchug, Zaporozhye, Cherkasy, Gomel, the capital of Ukraine is Kiev, thousands of regional centers. The art of mastering each of them had both common features and features arising from the specifics of the situation, the degree of preparation of the city for defense, enemy tactics, and the availability of forces and means.

...Heavy battles unfolded even on the distant approaches to the regional center, a major railway junction - the ancient Orel, whose fortifications have been preserved since the 17th century. The two-year occupation of this city allowed the German command to carry out a set of measures to prepare it for defense, equipping four external and three internal defensive lines with a high density of various kinds of engineering structures. The Kremlin and the fortress wall of the 17th century became the central strongholds. The task of liberating Orel was set by the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command as part of the Oryol offensive operation (code name "Kutuzov").

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The troops of the Western (commander - Colonel General V.D. Sokolovsky), Bryansk (commander - Colonel General M.M. Popov) and Central (commander - General of the Army K.K. Rokossovsky) participated in it. fronts.

By the end of July, the 61st Army (commander - Colonel General P.A. Belov), with the assistance of [1st Guards. army and the 4th Panzer Army defeated the enemy combat grouping. The 3rd, 63rd and 48th armies liberated Mtsensk and Stanovoy, thereby blocking Oryol, reaching the distant approaches to the city. The assault on the city of Orel was assigned to the 3rd (commander - Lieutenant General A.V. Gorbatov) and 63rd Army (commander - Lieutenant General V.Ya. Kolpakchi).

On the night of August 4, the advanced units of these armies approached the city. The first to start fierce battles on the outskirts of Orel were the 5th (commander - Colonel P.T. Mikhailitsin), 129th (commander - Colonel I.V. Panchuk) and 380th (commander - Colonel A.F. Kustov) rifle divisions. At dawn on August 4, having overcome the fierce resistance of the Nazi troops, the 1260th (commander - Major P.M. Plotnikov) and 1262nd (commander - Major N.A. Malashin) broke into Orel from the east. - forged regiments of the 380th Infantry Division. Parts of the 5th and 129th rifle divisions broke into the city from the southeast. The second battalion of the 190th Infantry Regiment of the 5th Infantry Division, commanded by Major V.D. Denisov. Together with the regiments of the 380th Rifle Division, tankers of the 17th Guards Tank Brigade of Colonel B.V. fought for the liberation of Orel with selfless courage and bravery. Shulgin. Assault detachments were created in formations, and assault groups in battalions.

Recalls the chief of staff of the 63rd Army, General V.A. Belyavsky:

"In those days, we saw before us a very strong enemy, skillful in tactics, who had
hard co

resistance on the defensive, organized countless counterattacks and, it should be noted, skillfully retreated. Leaving one line, the main forces of the enemy occupied a new one, as a rule, with a network of strongholds at heights and in populated areas. At the same time he left strong rearguards. They not only held back the advance of the Soviet troops, but often went over to counterattacks, using small groups of tanks and self-propelled guns as a kind of ambushes. Often, when retreating, the enemy mined the ways of advancing our troops, which was not so difficult to do in off-road conditions. The activity of its aircraft did not decrease either.

During August 4, street fighting took place in the eastern part of Orel. Enemy troops, pushed to the center of the city, blew up and set fire to administrative and residential buildings, industrial buildings, many of them planted time bombs. By the evening of August 4, having broken the enemy's resistance, units of the 63rd Army captured the eastern part of Orel, reached the Oka, and, on the shoulders of the retreating enemy, began to force the river. The inhabitants of Orel helped their liberators in every possible way - they reported about convenient passages to the rear of the defending units of the enemy, obtained information about his defense, assisted the soldiers in crossing the Oka.

On the night of August 5, fighting was going on in the western part of the city. Here the Nazis could not put up a long resistance, since units of the 269th and 308th rifle divisions of the 3rd Army approached the city from the north and northeast. The 339th Rifle Regiment of the 308th Rifle Division crossed the Oka northwest of Shchekhotikhino and, developing the offensive, broke into the northern outskirts of Orel. By 3 o'clock on August 5, subunits of the regiment took possession of Pionerskaya and Sadovaya streets and advanced towards the airfield. At the same time, the 347th Infantry Regiment of the 308th Infantry Division captured the northwestern outskirts of

Eagle. 79

At dawn on August 5, Eagle was completely released.

The liberation of Orel had a wide international resonance. In the weekly reports on military operations in all theaters, published in the Bulletin of Victory, the US War Department noted: "The Russian army, after prolonged intense fighting, captured the important stronghold of the Wehrmacht in Central Russia - Orel ... The loss of the Nazi troops this supply center and communications center is a major defeat for the Germans. Russian counterattacks are currently developing into a general offensive of the Red Army.

The victory of the Soviet troops found a wide response in the Wanglian press. On August 6, military historian and theorist Liddell Hart wrote: "The Russian occupation of Orel, located north of Kursk, is the greatest victory of the war ... and the psychological impact of this victory on the Germans will be terrifying."

In the same days, the troops of the Steppe Front under the command of General of the Army I.S. Konev. On the morning of August 5, intense battles for Belgorod began.

The enemy turned Belgorod into a strong center of resistance. A defensive bypass was created around the city with a dense network of bunkers and firing points in stone buildings. Only anti-tank ditches on the outskirts of the city were dug more than 10 km. The approaches to the defensive bypass were covered by minefields. The quarters of the city were adapted for street fighting. The heights of the Chalk Mountains were in the hands of the enemy, and our troops had to advance along the marshy lowlands, which were shot in advance by German artillery. A very difficult task faced the 89th Guards Rifle Division of Colonel M.P. Seryugin, advancing on Belgorod from the north. She was to face a frontal blow along a narrow

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lanes of the railway, to the right and left of which marshy swamps spread, to seize the railway station by storm.

Artillery and aviation paved the way for the Soviet infantry. Bombers, attack planes, and fighters of the 5th Air Army (commanded by General S.K. Goryunov) continuously hovered over the enemy positions, bombarded them with bombs, and shot them with cannons and machine guns. A flurry of fire and steel mixed the long-term fortifications with the ground. Unable to withstand the onslaught of the Soviet soldiers, the Nazis began to retreat to the city.

Having overcome the enemy defenses on the northern approaches to Belgorod, formations of the 69th Army started fighting on its outskirts. The advance of the troops of the 7th Guards Army, which crossed the North. Donets, further increased the threat to the enemy garrison from the east. The fact is that in the offensive zone of the 7th Guards Army, the front line of defense of the Nazi troops passed along the western bank of the North. Donets. It towered over the eastern one, which gave the enemy the opportunity to view the location of Soviet troops to a depth of 8-10 km. This, of course, made it difficult for the advancing units to covertly approach the river.

The blows of the Soviet troops after fierce fighting destroyed the German defenses not only on the northern and eastern approaches to Belgorod. An even more dangerous situation has developed for the enemy grouping on the western approaches to the city. Here, the 1st mechanized corps of Lieutenant General M.D. was actively operating as a mobile group of the 53rd Army. Tina straw. By 9 o'clock in the morning on August 5, the brigades of the first echelon of the corps crossed the river. Vezelka and, repelling strong enemy counterattacks, began to bypass Belgorod from the west.

The enemy garrison in the city was deeply engulfed from both flanks.

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Units of the 270th Guards Rifle Regiment (commander - Lieutenant Colonel N.E. Proshunin) of the 89th Guards Rifle Division were the first to break into Belgorod, followed by regiments of the 305th Rifle Division (commander - Colonel A.F. Vasiliev). Units of the 111th Division (commander Lieutenant Colonel A.N. Petrushin) of the 7th Guards Army entered the city from the east. Assault detachments and groups of the 93rd Guards Division under the command of Colonel A.F. Vasiliev attacked enemy strongholds in the city center. Artillery with its fire made passages in the fortress walls of the Kremlin, where the enemy was concentrated by force up to a separate regiment. At noon, a massive air strike was dealt to the enemy grouping.

By 6 p.m. on August 5, the city of Belgorod was completely cleared of the enemy. German troops, abandoning military equipment and the wounded, hastily retreated to the south. By this time, units of the 1st mechanized corps had already intercepted the railway and highway to Kharkov, and the enemy was forced to retreat along the valley of the North. Donets under the influence of Soviet aviation and artillery.

One of the oldest Russian cities was returned to the homeland, whose history is inextricably linked with the emergence and defense of the Russian state. Back in the 16th century, Belgorod was an important Russian military fortress and the center of the so-called Belgorod Line, the defensive line of the Muscovite state. This line of defense stood for about two centuries, until the borders of the lands of the state moved far to the south. Centuries passed, and the plains near Belgorod again became the scene of not only fierce armed struggle, but also the great glory of Russian weapons.

War correspondent Yu. Zhukov wrote from Belgorod on the evening of August 5: "Before us is the Belgorod railway station, so familiar to everyone who

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peaceful years to travel by train to the Crimean or Caucasian resorts. We all remember what a neat and tidy station it was, what order reigned in its halls, how hospitably the passengers were greeted in its cafeteria. Everything is dead here now. Broken glass crackles underfoot. Pulls burning and powder smoke. Lie on the platform still not removed corpses. Fresh funnels gape among the rails twisted by explosions. Behind the station, houses are burning, set on fire by the retreating

fascists... We are in Belgorod, an old Russian city, standing on the outskirts of the Ukrainian land, which is waiting for its liberators. Ahead is a long and difficult military suffering. And the guardsmen of the regiment, who came here fighting from near Stalingrad itself, are not going to take a break here."

At the end of September 1943, the troops of the fronts operating in the southern and southwestern directions rushed to the Dnieper. The path of the troops of the Steppe Front to this water barrier was blocked by Poltava, located on the Vorskla River, known as a fortress from the 15th century, the largest railway junction and industrial center. The Soviet troops failed to capture Poltava on the move.

Recalls the commander of the Steppe Front, General I.S. Konev:

"... Hard battles were ahead. It was necessary to cross the Vorskla and overcome the developed enemy defense system near the river itself on its right bank. The delay of the army at Poltava did not suit us, since the pace of advance on the right, main wing of the front was slowed down. The current situation itself required a quick exit to the Dnieper in the Kremenchug region. On September 22, A.S. Zhadov, who directly attacked Poltava. With A.S. Zhadov, we arrived in the 95th Guards Rifle Division, commanded by Major General N.S. Nikitchenko.

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After examining the area, we made sure that in the offensive zone of the 33rd Guards Rifle Corps of General M.I. Kozlov created a very difficult situation. The most difficult task fell to the lot of the 95th Guards Rifle Division. In the offensive zone of this division along the right bank of the river, a lowland stretched, which rested on a height with a steep slope, where machine guns, direct fire guns and assault guns were installed by the enemy. Having met with N.S. Nikitchenko at his OP, we discussed the action plan and set the task of liberating Poltava by dawn on September 23rd. At the same time, we understood what difficulties the units of the 95th division would have to overcome, so a similar task was set for the 97th Guards Rifle Division under the command of Colonel I.I. Antsiferova. Both formations required careful preparation of the assault, skillful organization of the battle, and most importantly, a powerful fighting spirit that ensured overcoming all difficulties in the execution of a combat order. On September 21 and 22, commanders and political workers, party and Komsomol organizations carried out a lot of work to mobilize all personnel of the divisions to fulfill the assigned tasks. At the same time, intensive training of assault detachments of the 5th Guards and 53rd armies was carried out. Issues were resolved in material and technical terms, combat missions were brought to the attention of each fighter ...

Troops of the 53rd Army from the dawn of September 22 attacked enemy positions on the right bank of the Vorskla and successfully moved forward.

By the evening of September 22, they captured the right bank of the river in the Cherov, Klimovka, Vostochnaya Kozuba sector and continued to push the enemy in an easterly direction.

The first to break into the city were scouts of the 95th Guards Rifle Division, led by a senior lieutenant

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tenant Skachko and scouts of the 84th Infantry Division Sergeant Mukhin and Private Konshalov. Skachko's group reached Oktyabrsky Park by 3 o'clock. Scout Ivan Belykh hoisted the Red Banner on the ancient monument to the participants of the historical battle near Poltava - the obelisk of "Glory". Mukhin and Konshalov reached the city center and hoisted the Red Banner on one of the buildings. Following the scouts, specially trained assault detachments of the 95th Guards, 84th Rifle and 9th Guards Airborne Divisions broke into the city from different sides.

Having broken through to the city center, the commander of the 20th Infantry Regiment of the 84th Infantry Division, Major M.Zh. Yermishin hoisted the Red Banner on one of the surviving buildings of the central square of Poltava. Major M.Ya. Ponomarev, captain N.G. Yashnikova and many others. In stubborn street battles, by the morning of September 23, parts of these divisions cleared Poltava from Nazi invaders ... "

A day later, the troops of the Western Front liberated Smolensk and Roslavl.

ORDER OF THE SUPREME COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TO GENERAL OF THE ARMY SOKOLOVSKY

"The troops of the Western Front, continuing their successful offensive, crossed the Dnieper River and, after stubborn fighting, today, September 25, stormed the large regional center, the city of Smolensk, the most important strategic center of German defense in the Western direction.

Today, the troops of the Western Front, after two days of fierce fighting, broke the enemy's resistance and captured the operationally important communication center and a powerful stronghold of the German defense in the Mogilev direction - the city of Roslavl ... "

The battle for the Dnieper, which began at the end of August, was gaining momentum. It was attended by the troops of the Central, Voronezh, Steppe, Southwestern and Southern fronts (since October 20, 1943 - the Belorussian and four Ukrainian fronts). Soviet troops liberated Surazh, Kremenchug, Zaporozhye, Melitopol, Dnepropetrovsk, Kyiv, Zhitomir. In early December, the main efforts of the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front were aimed at defeating the enemy grouping in the Alexandria region. On December 6, the troops of the front, after fierce fighting, captured the city. The enemy tried to delay the advance of the Soviet troops on the outskirts of Znamenka.

In connection with the successful offensive of the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front (commanded by Marshal I.S. Konev) in the Alexandria direction and the active operations of the troops of the left wing of the front in the Krivoy Rog direction, the enemy was forced to withdraw part of the forces from the Cherkasy direction and transfer them to strengthen their Alexandrian grouping. In the zone of the 52nd Army, the bloodless units of the 72nd Infantry and part of the forces of the 3rd Panzer Divisions, the remnants of the tank regiment of the SS Viking Panzer Division and the 217th Regiment of the 57th Infantry Division w

"Given the current situation, the commander of the 52nd Army, Lieutenant General K.A. On December 6, Koroteev decided to continue the offensive with the immediate goal of capturing the city of Cherkasy, and then develop success on the Smela. The offensive was scheduled for 9 December. In accordance with the order of the commander of the 52nd Army No. 0023 /op dated December 6, the army troops were supposed to, inflicting the main blow in the direction of the southeastern outskirts of Cherkassy, capture the city, and then develop an offensive on Smela. The task of defeating the enemy in Cherkassy and capturing the city was assigned to the formations of the 73rd arrows

fore body. The 78th Rifle Corps with the main forces of the 373rd Rifle Division was supposed to assist the advance of the 73rd Corps from the Dnieper. From the south, the offensive of the army's shock group was provided by the forces of the 62nd Guards Rifle Division, which was given the task of changing the Dubievka excavation from elev. 111.5, 29th Guards Regiment of the 7th Guards Airborne Division, firmly defend this line and, as the 7th Guards Airborne Division advances, advance with its left flank in the direction of mark 98.4. The reserve of the army commander was one battalion of the 186th regiment of the 62nd guards rifle division.

The army artillery group, consisting of the 568th cannon artillery and 17th guards mortar regiments, was supposed to suppress enemy artillery in the Kirillovka area, on the southern outskirts of Cherkassy and in the Zmogailovka area and prevent the approach of enemy reserves from Belozerye , Stepanki and Zmogailovka. The 33rd anti-tank artillery brigade, which constituted the anti-tank reserve of the army commander, was supposed to prepare and occupy three anti-tank areas with the main forces. One regiment of this brigade was intended to create an anti-tank area with the task of not

to allow a breakthrough of enemy infantry and tanks from the directions of the Kirillovka farm, brick factories.

The 5th Air Army was tasked with delivering bombing and assault strikes against enemy troops and defensive facilities, supporting the 52nd Army's offensive against Cherkassy and conducting reconnaissance behind the approach of enemy reserves. The main targets for bomber operations were enemy manpower and firepower in the Ktakh strongpoints, artillery in firing positions, as well as the most important targets in the cities of Cherkassy, Smela and Zheleznodorozh

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naya station Bobrinskaya. In accordance with the artillery offensive plan, 30 minutes were allotted for the artillery preparation of the attack, of which, during the first five minutes, guns and mortars of all calibers were to participate in a fire attack along the front line of the enemy's defense. In the next fifteen minutes, artillery and mortars were called in to conduct aimed fire at pre-designated and newly identified firing points and enemy manpower. The attack was to be preceded by a ten-minute fire raid along the front edge and the reverse slopes of the heights in the location of the enemy's strongholds. Artillery support for the attack was to be carried out by the method of successive concentration of fire. A significant part of the artillery was allocated as escort guns to the combat formations of infantry and tanks. During December 6-8, part of the troops fought on the outskirts of the city and the main forces were preparing for a decisive assault on it.

Party and Komsomol meetings were held in the units, at which the results of the work done were summed up, its shortcomings were noted, and the specific tasks of the communists and Komsomol members in the upcoming assault were discussed. Many communists received instructions from the party to hold talks with newly arrived reinforcements about how to deal with enemy tanks, about the peculiarities of street fighting, about actions as part of assault groups, etc. There were also talks about strengthening military discipline, about vigilance and the preservation of military and state secrets. A lot of work was done to bring the combat mission to the attention of the personnel and to form and put together assault groups, which, among others, included experienced soldiers, sergeants and officers from among the communists and Komsomol members. Aviation continued to strike at the troops of the pro

tivnik in the area of the railway station, in the southeastern part of Cherkasy, in the areas of the farms Kirillovka and Danilovka.

By the morning of December 9, the army troops took up their starting position for the offensive. At 8:30 am, after a 30-minute artillery preparation, the assault on the city began.

From the first minutes of the battle, the enemy put up stubborn resistance in all sectors of the offensive of our troops. The fighting was most fierce in the area of the railway station. Repelling furious counterattacks by the infantry and tanks of the enemy and slowly advancing, clearing the quarters of the city from the enemy, units of the 1st Guards Airborne Division captured the railway station by the end of the day. One regiment of this division, pushing the enemy to the south, reached the line "Sar" (1.5 km south-west of the station), a recess marked with [5], thereby securing the main forces of the army advancing on the city from possible attacks. enemy ditch from the south. Parts of the 254th Rifle Division were attacking directly in the city. Having cleared a number of quarters of the enemy, the division repulsed two strong enemy counterattacks in the afternoon. Simultaneously with units of the 254th Rifle Division, the 294th and 373rd Rifle Divisions fought in the city. Two regiments of the 294th Infantry Division advanced along the streets in a southeasterly direction.

Having entrenched themselves on the achieved lines, the troops simultaneously carried out a regrouping, completing it on the night of December 13.

At 9 o'clock on December 13, the troops of the army began the second assault on the city. The 294th rifle division, having captured several houses on the outskirts of the city, by 15 o'clock wedged into the depth of the enemy's defense. The infantrymen broke into houses and, using grenades and automatic weapons, cleared them of the enemy. Artillerymen at point-blank range

brought down the counterattacking enemy tanks. The mortars hit the infantry following the tanks with well-aimed fire. The 7th Guards Airborne Division had no advance at the beginning of the assault. Everything that the enemy had in this area was thrown to help the Cherkassy garrison. The enemy tried at any cost to drag out the fighting and stay in the city. Measures were needed to ensure the successful completion of the assault. To this end, the commander of the army entrusted the commander of the artillery of the army with the task of keeping the places of accumulation of enemy forces under continuous fire. Aviation was supposed to control the main communications of the enemy. To cover the shortfall in the combat units that suffered significant losses, the personnel of the rear units were sent. By the end of the day, the 7th Guards Airborne Division reached the southeastern outskirts of the city and completed the clearance of the Nazis from four more quarters. The consolidated battalion of the 254th rifle division drove the enemy out of their positions along the railway embankment and, having overcome several enemy barriers by 22:00, created favorable conditions for going on the offensive in the zone of the 254th division. The 373rd Rifle Division with its 1235th Regiment with a battalion of the 1237th Rifle Regiment repelled all enemy counterattacks and captured three quarters during the day. Finally losing faith in the ability to hold their positions in the city, the enemy began to withdraw troops through Zmogailovka to Smela.

At 02:30 on December 14, the assault on the city ended with its complete liberation from the fascist invaders. Having entrenched in it part of the forces, the troops of the army proceeded to pursue the enemy in the directions to Smela and Krasnaya Sloboda. The capital of our motherland, Moscow, saluted the troops that had captured the city of Cherkassy with a salute.

FROM THE DIRECTIVE OF THE STAFF OF THE SUPREME HIGH COMMAND OF JANUARY 12, 1944, TO THE COMMANDER OF THE TROOPS OF THE 1st AND 2nd UKRAINIAN FRONTS TO CARRY OUT THE KORSUN-SHEVCHENKOV OPERATION

The enemy grouping, which continues to remain in the area of Zvenigorodka, Mironovka, Smela, ties up the actions of the adjacent flanks of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts and delays their advance to the Southern Bug River ... The Supreme High Command puts before the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts, the immediate task is to encircle and destroy the enemy grouping in the Zvenigorodka-Mironovka ledge by closing the left-flank units of the 1st Ukrainian Front and the right-flank units of the 2nd Ukrainian Front somewhere in the area of Shpola, because only such a combination of troops of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts will give them the opportunity to develop a striking force for reaching the river Yuzhny Bug. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command under

says:

1. To the 1st Ukrainian Front, the main efforts of the 27th Army, 5th Guards. TC and parts of the forces of the 40th Army to send to capture the Talnoye, Zvenigorodka line, with the subsequent advancement of mobile units to Shpola ...
2. For the 2nd Ukrainian Front, the main efforts of the 52nd Army, the 4th Guards Army, part of the forces of the 53rd Army and at least two mechanized corps should be directed to seize the Shpola, Novomyrhorod line and unite in the Shpola area with troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front.
3. Direct the main efforts of the aviation of both fronts to assist the troops in carrying out this tasks.
4. Keep in mind that the destruction of the Zvenigorodka-Mironovka enemy grouping dramatically improves our operational position at the junction of fronts, immediately

significantly strengthens both fronts and facilitates the entry of our troops to the Southern Bug River ...
Headquarters of the Supreme High Command J. STALIN ANTONOV

Spring 1944. Soviet troops successfully solved the tasks of liberating the Right-Bank Ukraine. The formations of the 1st Ukrainian Front (commanded by Marshal G.K. Zhukov) met fierce resistance from the enemy when approaching the ancient fortress of Kamenets-Podolsk (Kamenets-Podolsky). The commander of the front forces assigned the task of capturing the city on the move to part of the forces of the 4th Panzer Army (commanded by Lieutenant General D.D. Lemoshenko). The city has been attacked from three sides since dawn on 25 March.

During the assault on Kamenetz-Podolsk, the 29th Guards Uneh Motorized Rifle Brigade under the command of Colonel M.S. Smirnov. She was the first to cross the river. Smotrich. The motorized rifle company of Senior Lieutenant M.I. Kozlov. Its guards sergeants Gulyaev, Chekushev, Marchenko, corporal Gorkotin and private Svintsov attacked and killed the guards on the Turkish bridge, preventing the enemy from blowing it up. At the same time, senior lieutenant Hero of the Soviet Union Vladimir Zinchenko, supporting the motorized riflemen, crushed three enemy anti-aircraft guns right on the bridge with his tank. In this battle he died a heroic death. The sappers of junior lieutenant Sokolov cleared the bridge under enemy fire. Mortarmen under the command of senior lieutenants I.S. Samykin and V.A. Gusev, they did not allow enemy units to reach the Turkish bridge, inflicting heavy losses on them.

On the same night, the soldiers of the 61st Sverdlovsk Guards Brigade under the command of Colonel N.G. Zhukov crossed the river. Look at the ford. On the site, several

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to the north of the Turkish bridge, they fired eight guns, nine tanks at point-blank range and destroyed up to a regiment of enemy infantry. The 16th Guards Mechanized Brigade under the command of Lieutenant Colonel V.E. Ryvzha. She immediately captured the eastern outskirts of Kamenetz-Podolsk and the town of Kitay-Gorod. From here, the enemy least expected a blow.

On March 26, Colonel Medvedev's 17th Guards Mechanized Brigade, reinforced by artillery and sappers, quickly reached the river. Dniester in the Zhvanets-Khotin region, defeated up to two regiments of infantry, destroyed over 2 thousand vehicles that had accumulated at the crossing over the Dniester, and captured the bridge across this river. Heavy losses were inflicted on the enemy, a lot of military equipment and prisoners were captured. By the end of the day, the city was completely cleared of the enemy.

Four months later, the tankers of the 4th Tank and 3rd Guards Tank Armies (commander - Lieutenant General P.S. Rybalko) will again have to block, and then together with the 60th Army (commander - Colonel General P.I. A. Kurochkin) to storm a large settlement, the most important railway junction of Western Ukraine, the city of Lvov, founded as a fortress at the beginning of the 13th century.

For three days - July 24, 25 and 26 - there were fierce battles on the outskirts of Lvov. The enemy, relying on positions prepared in engineering terms and using the terrain favorable for defense, tried to delay the development of the success of the Soviet units. On July 26, troops of the 60th Army captured a number of strongholds and started fighting on the outskirts of Lvov. Parts of the 4th Guards Tank Corps under the command of General P.P. Poluboyarova, operating along the Miklashov-Lvov highway, at 11 pm on July 26 broke into the eastern outskirts of the city, where they connected with the 10th Guards Tank Corps of the 4th Tank Army.

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By the end of July 26, it became known at the headquarters of the 1st Ukrainian Front that the German command had begun to withdraw the troops of the Lvov group to the southwest. To avoid the destruction of the city, at dawn on July 27, the troops of the 3rd Guards Tank Army launched an offensive against Lvov from the west, and the 60th Army attacked from the north with the forces of the 23rd Rifle Corps, the 28th Corps - from the east and 106th - from the southeast: 10th Guards Tank Corps 4th Tank

The army continued to wage intense battles in the city. The 38th Army was advancing south of Lvov. Quite fierce battles flared up both in the center and on the outskirts. Assault detachments, together with tankers, with the support of artillery, completely liberated the city by dawn on July 27.

Great efforts had to be made by the Soviet troops during the liberation of the capital of Lithuania, the city of Vilnius (until 1939 - Vilna), with its fortifications of the XIXth century.

On July 8, 1944, troops of the 5th Army (commander - Lieutenant General N.I. Krylov) together with the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps - units of the 5th Guards Tank Army approached from the southeast (commander lieutenant general of the tank troops N.A. Rotmistrov) reached the outer defensive line of the Lithuanian capital. At the same time, bypassing the city from the north and south, parts of the army cut off the railroads going from Vilnius to Lida and Grodno, thereby putting the Vilnius garrison of the Germans under the threat of encirclement. The position of the enemy worsened by noon on July 9, when the soldiers of the 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps stormed the city of Lida.

For six days there were fierce battles for Vilnius. The fact is that the German command attached great importance to its retention. It was an important stronghold on the outskirts of East Prussia, both

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sintered the right flank of the northern Wehrmacht grouping. In addition, in an attempt to delay the offensive of the Red Army in the central direction, the enemy wanted to gain time by stubborn defense in order to put his units in order, bring up reserves, and create a new front of defense along the Lida-Vilnius line. The wooded-lake nature of the area, the presence of a large number of water barriers (the rivers Viliya, Marechanka, Dzishva) contributed to the organization of a new defensive line here.

Long before the approach of the Soviet forward units, the Germans began to build defensive structures in the Vilnius region. The city itself was also heavily fortified. The Vilnius garrison consisted of the remnants of the 14th, 299th infantry, 221st and 391st security divisions, units of the 170th infantry division, 765th and 671st mountain rifle brigades, 712th grenadier, 9th police regiments, 11th, 12th, 16th sapper battalions, 236th security, 644th construction battalions, several marching and training units. In addition, already during the fighting, the Germans dropped up to 600 paratroopers from the 6th regiment of the 2nd airborne division, hastily transferred by aircraft from Germany, to help the Vilnius garrison. Numerous numbering of the remnants of broken formations and units assembled for the defense of Vilnius testified to the heavy losses suffered by the enemy during the offensive of the Red Army. The total number of the German garrison in the city reached 12-15 thousand people. The enemy had tanks, artillery and self-propelled guns.

However, the Germans failed to make full use of the defensive lines equipped on the outskirts of the city. The rapid advance of the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps and the forward detachments of the 5th Army, which already broke through to the outskirts of Vilnius on July 7

and, deprived the enemy of the opportunity to conduct defensive battles in the field and forced him to heavy street fighting. At the same time, on July 8, the right flank of the 72nd Rifle Corps came out northwest of Vilnius to the Podberezye line, west of Resh, and the units of the 65th Rifle Corps intercepted all routes leading from the city to the southwest and west, isolated the enemy grouping and disrupted the possibility of its interaction with the troops defending on the rest of the front.

On July 9, the left-flank units of the 72nd Rifle Corps (215th Rifle Division), continuing the fighting in the northern and northwestern parts of the city, went directly to the northern bank of the river. Viliya west of Vilnius. At the same time, the 97th Rifle Division of the 65th Corps crossed over in the Ponara area to the northern bank of the river. As a result, the German garrison was

surrounded. On the same day, units of the 72nd and 65th Rifle Corps, acting together with the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps and squeezing the enemy from the north, east and south, captured the entire northern, eastern and southern parts of the city. Parts of the 5th Guards Tank Army the day before, they captured the railway station and the airfield.

Fighting continued in the center of the city and in its western part.

In order to help the troops surrounded in the Vilnius region, on the night of July 9, the Germans removed from other sectors of the front north of Vilnius a group up to a regiment of motorized infantry with 150 tanks and self-propelled guns and threw it at Meishagol and Evie with the task of - break the encirclement ring. At the same time, enemy aviation sought to bomb the combat formations of our troops and the crossings across the Vkleika and Viliya rivers. During the 9th, 10th, and until noon on July 11, fierce fighting took place in the Meishagol area. 63rd

and the 277th rifle divisions of the 72nd corps, having taken up defense at the turn of Podberezye, the Swedes, repelled enemy attacks. An anti-tank destroyer brigade and regiments of self-propelled artillery were advanced to help them.

The situation created in connection with the Germans pulling up new forces in the Vilnius direction required the immediate withdrawal of mobile formations from the city and the deployment of the main forces of the 5th Army north of the river. Viliya. On July 9, the commander of the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front, General of the Army I.D. Chernyakhovsky ordered to leave two divisions for the final destruction of the Vilnius garrison of the Germans and the capture of the city; the main forces of the 5th Army, on the morning of July 11, go on the offensive with the task of defeating the enemy's Meishagol grouping. The 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps, transferred from 24:00 on July 9 to the operational subordination of the commander of the 5th Army, was ordered to be transported to the northern bank of the river. Viliya and concentrate northwest of Resh to strike at Meyshagol. The 5th Guards Tank Army was also withdrawn from Vilnius and concentrated in the area of Rudzishki, Landvorovo in readiness for operations around Meishagol from the southwest.

During July 11 and 12, units of the 72nd Rifle and 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps defeated the Meishagol grouping and pushed it back to the northwest. The troops of the right flank of the 5th Army occupied Meishagol and reached the line northwest of Meishagol, Evie. At the same time, the 45th Rifle Corps, advancing southwest of Vilnius, reached Sumelishki, Vysokiy Dvor with its left flank.

Meanwhile, the struggle in Vilnius itself continued. Parts of the 65th Rifle Corps, blocking and destroying enemy pockets of resistance, advanced towards the central part of the city. Soviet aviation

* Assaults of the Great Patriotic

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The formation, supporting the actions of the ground units, subjected the enemy garrison to crushing blows. On July 12, bombers of the 1st Air Army made 370 sorties, dropping about 90 tons of air bombs on the main enemy resistance center in the prison area alone. Using air strikes, by the morning of July 13, our units occupied the central part of the city and divided the German garrison into two main groups. The first continued to resist in the Lukishki area, having its main stronghold in the prison, the second defended itself in the area of the observatory.

On the morning of June 13, the enemy, in three groups of up to 1,000 men in total, tried to break through along the northern bank of the Viliya River in a northwestern direction, but stumbled upon parts of the 45th Rifle Corps and was almost completely destroyed. In the middle of the day, a decisive assault was made on the last pockets of resistance, and by 17:00 the city was completely cleared of enemy groups.

On the same day, the enemy made another attempt to help his Vilnius garrison. Having concentrated up to 40 tanks and 100 vehicles with motorized infantry from the 6th Panzer, 221st Security Divisions, 16th Police, 5th and 6th Airborne Regiments in a narrow area, the Germans went on the offensive in the area of the north west of Evie. Taking advantage of the gap between the advanced units of the 72nd and 45th rifle corps, advancing to the front of Zhosli, Yegelyany, Uzhugost, the enemy captured Evie and part of the forces broke through to Rykonty. The 29th Tank Corps of the 5th Guards Tank Army was moved to the Rykonta area to liquidate the group that had broken through. The 72nd Rifle Corps, with its left flank, occupied a line along the southern bank of the Viliya River with a front to the south and southwest. At the same time, the right-flank units of the 45th Rifle Corps advanced to the area south of Ry

konty front to the north. On July 14, the enemy grouping was engulfed in the Rykonta area and destroyed.

At the end of 1944, Soviet troops began to liberate the cities occupied by the Nazis outside the country.

In the September days of 1944, the Red Army reached the eastern borders of Yugoslavia. The two fraternal armies, located thousands of kilometers apart, have been waging a tense heroic struggle against the common enemy, fascism, for over three years. Now they met on the soil of Yugoslavia and fought together.

The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia and the Fatherland Front of Bulgaria carried out the Belgrade operation from September 28 to October 20. The actions of the soldiers of the 64th Rifle Corps of the 57th Army, commanded by Lieutenant General I.K. Kravtsov. Using evasive maneuvers, he quickly moved forward. High organizational qualities and personal courage were shown by the commander of the 214th Guards Rifle Regiment of the 73rd Guards Rifle Division, Major N.I. Yashchenko. It is recorded in the combat log that the regiment advanced along a narrow gorge, making its way along the rocky bottom of the river through uplifted stones and rocks. Neither off-road, nor work in cold water, nor the great physical fatigue of the personnel could slow down the advance.

Warriors of the 4th Mechanized Corps, commanded by Major General of the Tank Forces V.I. Zhdanov, in just a day they made a 120-kilometer march and overcame the East Serbian mountains. Having broken the resistance of the enemy in the Moravian Valley, the Soviet tank crews, together with the soldiers of the 1st Proletarian Corps of the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia, on October 12, captured the settlement of Topola and, putting Yugoslav soldiers on the tanks, rushed to Belgrade.

After fierce seven-day street fighting, with the active assistance of the population, on October 20, the capital of Yugoslavia gained freedom. The actions of the Soviet and Yugoslav troops were supported by the 17th Air Army, commanded by Colonel General of Aviation V.A. Sudets. Soviet pilots literally hung over the roads along which the enemy retreated. The soldiers of the 617th Assault and 166th Guards Assault Aviation Regiments showed themselves to be masters of air combat, assault and bomb strikes.

January 1945. Having outflanked the enemy, who continued to stubbornly cling to the fortifications in the area of Insterburg, Gumbinnen and in the zone of the Masurian lakes, from the north and south, the Soviet troops created favorable conditions for encircling the main forces of Army Group Center. The fascist German command, seeing the threat of encirclement, on the night of January 22, began to withdraw its troops from the Gumbinnen, Augustow, Lomza line to the west. In order not to let the Nazi troops out of East Prussia, the commander of the 2nd Belorussian Front, General of the Army K.K. Rokossovsky turned the main forces to the north to attack in the direction of Osterode-Elbing. Soviet offensive operations began on the territory of East Prussia.

Thus, 1943 was the first victorious year for the Red Army. It began with the defeat of the enemy at Stalingrad, went down in history with the Battle of Kursk, ended with a successful

the exit of Soviet troops to the Dnieper and the capture of bridgeheads on its western bank. In 1944, Soviet troops continued and completed the liberation of the Motherland. Right-bank Ukraine, Moldova were liberated, the largest Belarusian strategic offensive operation was carried out.

During the operations and battles carried out, hundreds of cities and large settlements, thousands of villages and hamlets were liberated from the enemy. Most of them the enemy gave only after a stubborn defensive battle.

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Therefore, the problem of storming cities and large settlements at that time was one of the most urgent for the Soviet command.

At the same time, one must understand that the stubborn defense of many Soviet cities, the outskirts of which were built up for many kilometers with houses of the private sector, which were not valuable for equipping resistance centers, was very difficult. In addition, the Soviet command at that time preferred a wide bypass of enemy resistance nodes to their frontal attack. Therefore, the enemy often left the cities after resistance on their outskirts, and it rarely came to street fighting.

BREAKTHROUGH TO EASTERN EUROPE

The most difficult tasks were solved by the advancing troops during the assault on the so-called cities of fortresses on the territory of Poland and East Prussia. "Each bunker, every quarter of a German city and every German village," emphasized Hitler's order, "must turn into a fortress, in which the enemy will either bleed to death, or the garrison of this fortress will die in hand-to-hand combat under its ruins ... In this the severe struggle for the existence of the German people should not spare even monuments of art and other cultural values. It must be carried through to the end."

Ideological indoctrination was accompanied by repressions of the military command. An order was announced in the troops on receipt, which demanded to keep East Prussia at all costs. In order to strengthen discipline and instill general fear in the army and home front, Hitler's directive on the death penalty "with the immediate execution of death sentences before the ranks" was carried out with particular cruelty. With these measures, the fascist leadership managed to force the soldiers to fight with the despair of the doomed.

...On February 3, 1945, one of the largest offensive operations of the Great Patriotic War ended. However, in the rear of the 1st Belorussian Front, there are two rather strong enemy groupings in terms of composition - the garrisons of the fortress cities of Schneidemühl (Pile) and Poznan.

On January 26, the 2nd Guards Tank Army reached the distant approaches to Schneidemühl, a city located

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located in the system of the so-called forefield of the German border fortifications in the eastern part of Normandy. According to intelligence, its garrison consisted of three separate infantry regiments, an artillery regiment, an Alarm battalion (a local Nazi organization), an engineer regiment, three Volkssturm battalions, an anti-tank division, up to 60 tanks and assault guns. The total number of the garrison reached 12 thousand people.

The city was prepared in terms of engineering for all-round defense, had four defensive bypasses and a citadel. Full profile trenches were equipped in the streets and squares, barricades and blockages were prepared. Artillery firing positions were located in the basements of large buildings and semi-basements. The basis of the defense was an infantry battalion,

defending one or two quarters (250-300 m along the front), having two companies in the first line, and one in the second echelon. The company, having six to eight light machine guns, twenty to thirty Panzerfaust anti-tank rifles, defended a group of houses. The platoon, having two or three light machine guns and ten Panzerfaust rifles, defended one or two houses. The squad, armed with a light machine gun and four or five Panzerfaust rifles, defended one or two apartments in the house. The infantry company allocated to the second echelon of the battalion was located in buildings prepared for defense inside the quarter.

On January 27, the 2nd Guards Tank Army was ordered, "bypassing Schneidemühl from the south, to break through the Pomeranian defensive area on the move and, bypassing the Mezeritsky fortification area from the north, go to the Oder River." The task of capturing Schneidemühl was assigned to suitable formations of the 61st and 47th armies. However, all attempts over the next three days to break through the outer defensive line of the fortress city were unsuccessful due to the fact that connections

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These armies had to repulse counterattacks by the Netherlands Motorized Brigade and the 8th Police Division south and east of Schneidemühl. Leading the offensive to the north, the troops of the 47th and 61st Armies in cooperation with the 12th Guards Tank Corps of the 2nd Guards Tank Army | February surrounded the enemy in Schneidemühl. Formations of the 1st Army of the Polish Army, the 47th Army and the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps completed the breakthrough of the positions of the Pomeranian Wall and deployed battles to the west of it. K. On February 3, the armies of the right wing of the front reached the line north of Bydgoszcz, Flatow. At dawn on February 3, the task of defeating the Schneidemühl garrison was given to the commander of the 47th Army, Major General F.I. Perkhovich. The grouping for blocking and subsequent defeat of the enemy in Schneidemühl was allocated the following forces and means: 125th Rifle Corps (commanded by Major General A.M. divisions commanded by colonels V.G. Chernov, M.M. Muzykin, I.R. Shargorodsky, 334th heavy tank regiment (commander - lieutenant colonel F.A. Garashchenko), 1892 self-propelled artillery regiment (commander - lieutenant colonel S.N. Korosyly). The commander of the army was subordinate to the 22nd breakthrough artillery division (commander Major General D.S. Zrazhevsky) consisting of cannon, howitzer, heavy howitzer brigades, as well as the 32nd mortar brigade under the command of Colonel L.N. Likhachev and the 41st Guards Mortar Brigade (commander Colonel E.I. Karelin). Aviation support was provided by the 3rd bomber aviation corps of Aviation Major General A.Z. Karavatsky, 6th Fighter Aviation Corps, Major General of Aviation I.M. Dzusov, two aviation bomber and one fighter aviation division, as well as the 4th Polish mixed aviation division of Colonel A.S. Fomeiko.

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Ten days were allocated for the preparation of the assault on the fortress city. Assault detachments and groups were created in rifle divisions. The basis of the assault detachment was the rifle battalion. It was reinforced by a tank company or a self-propelled gun battery, an artillery battalion, a mortar battery, flamethrower and engineer platoons, a platoon of anti-tank guns, and a chemical squad. The assault group was formed on the basis of a rifle company. She received for reinforcement a tank platoon, a mortar company, an artillery battery, a flamethrower squad, two or three chemists. February 5, General F.I. Perkhovich held a demonstration lesson in a specially equipped town, which was attended by the commanders of regiments and battalions, reinforcement units. He ordered similar exercises to be carried out in all created assault detachments and groups.

In the following days, issues of interaction, organization of fire destruction of the enemy by artillery and aviation were worked out on the mock-up of the city. All commanders, up to and including the company commander, received Schneidemühl's plans with a single numbering of quarters and the most important objects of the city. The engineering units worked hard, the commanders of which

classes in all rifle battalions and artillery divisions. General D.S. Zrazhevsky, together with the head of artillery of the corps, Colonel M.I. Sakov worked out the issues of using guns and mortars during artillery preparation and combat in the city. Actions with aviation were especially carefully coordinated.

Political workers did a great deal of work with the personnel. Its forms were the most radical: individual conversations, meetings, rallies, newspapers and leaflets. Difficult tasks were solved by the rear units, which provided the soldiers with ammunition and food.

The assault on the city was scheduled for February 12. It was preceded by an air strike. It was attended by over 300

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aircraft. Artillery preparation began at dawn and lasted 90 minutes. At 8 o'clock (the time of the start of breakfast at the enemy's), assault detachments and groups rushed to the attack along the entire outer defensive contour. They were actively supported by artillery and aviation, dominating the air.

From the report of the artillery headquarters of the 125th rifle corps:

"... The assault began with the fire of supporting means that suppressed the targets predetermined by them, especially important tasks were assigned to guns put forward for direct fire. Artillery of assault detachments (45-mm, 76-mm regimental and divisional guns) was used to destroy long-term enemy firing points. 45-mm guns could fire from the upper floors of the captured buildings. They were used to destroy uncovered observed manpower, tanks, self-propelled artillery, as well as to repel counterattacks, fire at windows and embrasures... Artillery of larger calibers was used quite effectively as part of assault detachments. An ordinary brick building | 22-mm projectile from a distance of 300-400 m made its way through. The complete destruction of a two- or three-storey building was achieved with 15-20 shells. At the same time, it was practiced that 122-mm howitzers were brought to firing positions (due to their low maneuverability) usually at night. They were most often installed behind the barricades opposite the object of assault. Moving them during the daytime battle was allowed as an exception. 152-mm gun-howitzers and 203-mm howitzers, as heavier systems, were used at direct fire, mainly to destroy especially strong enemy structures, as well as those buildings that could not be destroyed by smaller caliber artillery and engineering equipment. Concrete-piercing shells of these systems could not

only suppress firing points

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the enemy, but also to make breaches in buildings for the advancement of infantry.

The tanks moved in the combat formations of the infantry, supporting it with fire along the streets, along the windows and loopholes of the houses. The distances between them were chosen such as to provide fire assistance to the tank in front. In order to protect the vehicles from being thrown from the upper floors with grenades and bottles with a combustible mixture, all hatches of the tanks were closed. Flamethrower tanks, under the cover of artillery, burned out the enemy, who had settled in buildings and shelters. Self-propelled artillery installations fired from the spot and destroyed wooden and stone buildings prepared by the enemy for defense, barricades. To support the tanks in battle, a group of submachine gunners and sappers (3-5 people) was attached to each of them, which, through observation, identified enemy firing points and made target designations with missiles. The sappers cleared roads, cleared passages with explosives in barricades and stone walls. Directly behind each tank, at a distance of 50-100 m, one or two direct-fire anti-tank guns moved, with which the infantry group attached to the tanks indicated the targets, ensuring the advance of the tanks. Often, direct-fire weapons

new firing positions were brought up by tanks.

The use of tanks in street combat in most cases provided the possibility of firing at bunkers and basements, which played a major role in the assault on houses and objects (the possibility of a large angle of inclination of the gun). The control of tanks in battle was carried out by foot messengers from the observation posts of battalions, companies and by telephone from the observation posts of the regiments. The lack of radio stations in the tanks made it difficult to control.

Rifle units under cover of fire
advanced to

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attacked building, burst into it through doors, windows and breaches in the walls, destroying the enemy with fire and grenades. Often the fight in the building turned into hand-to-hand combat. With the start of the battle inside the building, fire weapons transferred fire to the upper floors, attic rooms and neighboring buildings in order to prevent the enemy from withdrawing and conducting counterattacks. The battle inside the building was carried out until the complete destruction or capture of the enemy in it. Specially assigned groups of fighters, acting quickly and decisively, successively cleared every room, apartment and floor of the enemy. All locked doors were broken down or blown up. The transition from one floor to another was carried out by groups of fighters on stairs or through gaps in the ceiling. When moving up the stairs, the groups moved from one platform to another with a throw, after firing at it and, if necessary, throwing grenades at it. Of particular importance was the use of hand grenades, point-blank fire, and hand-to-hand combat. As a result, the battle became especially fierce. The physical strength, agility of each fighter, as well as the solidarity and clarity of the actions of the entire assault group, came to the fore.

The commander of the assault group (detachment) controlled the units from an observation post located in the immediate vicinity of the attacked object. There was also a representative of a tank regiment (battalion). Next to them were the firepower of the support subgroup. Communication with the units fighting inside the building was maintained through messengers and signals. Platoon and squad commanders were with their subunits and directly supervised their combat. After the battle, the captured building was inspected from the basement to the attic in order to clear it of the surviving enemy groups and

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roving. Then measures were taken to secure the captured object: observers were posted, a fire system was organized to repel possible enemy counterattacks.

The enemy resisted fiercely. The fighting continued both day and night. Only at dawn on February 14, a red flag was hoisted over the citadel. As trophy documents testify, more than 8,000 soldiers and officers of the Wehrmacht were destroyed in the battle for Schneidemühl. About 700 people were taken prisoner. Moscow saluted the victors with twenty artillery volleys from two hundred and twenty-four guns.

The battles for Poznan, a city located on the western bank of the Warta River, were characterized by a greater scale of hostilities. Poznan is the oldest city of Greater Poland, which in the 10th-10th centuries served as the residence of Polish princes, and in 1815 it was the center of the Poznan Grand Duchy. After the Poznan uprising of 1918-1919, Poznan became part of the re-created Polish state.

The construction of this fortified city dates back to 1870-1872. At the same time, the main defensive structures of the old fortress type were erected and the fortress itself was built. In the 20th century, during the First World War, then in 1939, and especially during the Great Patriotic War, these structures were continuously improved and supplemented with new ones in relation to the requirements of modern defense. It had a developed system of defensive structures inside and outside the city and a powerful fortress Citadel in the northern

its part and was the largest Node of resistance of the enemy. The Poznań Citadel was considered impregnable not without reason: in the entire history of its existence, no one has been able to seize it, to penetrate its walls, surrounded by a wide and deep moat.

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On January 22, formations of the 1st Guards Tank Army of the 1st Belorussian Front reached Poznan. There was an acute problem of capturing this city, in which there was a large enemy garrison, and the city itself was prepared for a stubborn defense.

The commander of the tank troops, Colonel-General M.E., recalls it. Katukov:

"... Now, on the way to Poznan, our scouts, led by Colonel A.M. Sobolev conducted a thorough reconnaissance of this fortified city. They captured the German lieutenant colonel Flakke, deputy commander of the fortified area. He drew a detailed plan of the Poznań fortress with all its forts, reinforced concrete caponiers and other fortifications.

The all-round defense of Poznan consisted of three contours. The first passed along the outskirts of the city, the second - along Pilna Street to Zokach, and the third, central, included the old part of the city and the Citadel. On the outskirts of the city, all the buildings were adapted for defense: loopholes were punched in the walls, windows were blocked with sandbags, cellars were connected by communication passages. The garrison of the fortress, according to Flakke, consisted of 20 thousand people. Later it turned out that 65,000 Nazis settled in the fortress.

"Poznan," Flakke said eagerly, "is the main center of defense along the Warta line. To the west, another one runs along the Obra River, and even farther away is a powerful fortified area called the Mezeritsky. The interfluvium of the Warta and the Oder consists entirely of defensive structures and is called the fortified quadrangle.

Poznan was a typical tank "gas chamber". On its narrow streets, well prepared for defense, the Germans would have knocked out all our vehicles. Therefore, I ordered the commanders of the 11th Guards Tank Corps and the 8th Guards Mechanized Corps A.Kh. Ba

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badzhanyan and I.F. Dremov to bypass Poznan from the north and south, closing the ring, cutting off all communications and preventing the Nazi garrison from leaving to the west. On January 25, the brigades of both corps crossed the Warta for the third time and surrounded Poznan. Around the city, tankers I.F. Dremov captured several airfields, on which there were a huge number of aircraft.

When I was told their number - 700, I doubted. We have not yet had such a large number of aircraft.
captured.

— Aren't the Dremovites exaggerating? - I expressed my doubts to the chief of staff, General M.A. Shavls, well. - You know, it happens in a fever. Let's reduce the number to at least five hundred.

As I expected, the staggering number of captured aircraft made a corresponding impression in Moscow. The Headquarters sent a special commission to check this unusual message, and it confirmed the initial figure: there were indeed more than 700 captured aircraft.

On January 24, the advance detachment of the 69th Army under the command of Major General S.A. went to Poznan. Tihonchuk as part of the 68th tank, 12th self-propelled artillery brigade, 370th rifle division and part of the forces of the 8th anti-tank brigade. The Poznań garrison is directly subordinated to the Reichsführer SS Himmler. From the outside, the city was surrounded by eighteen forts, one and a half kilometers apart from each other. Inside the city there were four forts of the Citadel type, but smaller. The citadel was the core of the fortress and was removed from

outer forts for five to eight kilometers. There were more than fifty pillboxes and bunkers in the gaps between the forts. In front of the forts, along the entire outer contour of the city, there was an old anti-tank ditch. All this formed, in the words of the chief of staff of the army, General V.A. Belyavsky, quite a powerful defensive field.

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An attempt to seize Poznan on the move by formations of the 69th, 1st Guards Tank and approaching 8th Guards Armies was not crowned with success. From January 26, the commander of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front entrusted the destruction of the garrison of the city of the fortress to the 8th Guards Army as part of the 29th Guards Rifle Corps (27th, 74th, 82nd, 39th Guards Rifle Divisions) and 28th Guards Rifle Corps (30th Guards, 117th and 312th Rifle Divisions), 11th Guards Tank Brigade, three separate tank, five separate self-propelled artillery regiments, four breakthrough artillery divisions, two anti-aircraft artillery divisions, as well as artillery and engineering units. Air support was assigned to formations of the 16th Air Army (bomber, assault, fighter aviation corps, two assault, five fighter and mixed air divisions).

The commander of the 8th Guards Army, General V.I. Chuikov:

"First of all, we destroyed the enemy grouping. We learned that the garrison of the city, together with the Volkssturm battalions, numbered up to 60 thousand people. Subsequently, the commandant of Poznan, General Mattern, testified that the garrison of the city consisted of two cadet schools, a reserve training division of assault guns, eleven battalions of internal security, airfield maintenance units, a training aviation regiment, two officer schools, two engineer battalions, a battle group "Lenzer" from local SS men, seventeen companies, formed from soldiers on vacation and soldiers of the 10th motorized, 192, bi 45th infantry divisions, defeated in previous battles. The entire group was commanded by Colonel Connel. He took over the garrison from Police Major General Mattern,

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dismissed from this position for lack of combat experience. Mattern remained in Poznań, helping the new commandant of the fortress. On the eve of our approach to the Poznan fortifications, Connel received the rank of general.

The all-round defense of the city was divided into four sections - "East", "South", "West", "North". The eastern sector was commanded by Connel himself, the southern sector by Major Holdfeld, the western sector by the former deputy head of the 5th officer school, Major Everest, and the northern sector by Major Schrez.

Fulfilling the will of Hitler, the command of the garrison decided to hold the city to the last soldier. In addition to forts, pillboxes, bunkers, residential buildings and other buildings were adapted for street fighting. There were many warehouses with weapons, various ammunition and food in the city, which allowed the garrison to conduct long-term battles in conditions of complete encirclement.

Adapting the fortress to the tactics of modern warfare, the German military experts dug anti-tank ditches in the areas of tank danger around the city, created field firing positions with the calculation of clearing roads and approaches to anti-tank ditches. Along the roads, the enemy equipped firing points arranged in a checkerboard pattern. They were equipped with anti-tank guns and heavy machine guns. Thus, on the Kurnik-Poznań highway, over a distance of 4 kilometers, we found up to 40 machine-gun cells. Behind the cells were firing positions for anti-tank guns with circular fire. All field installations were connected by a common fire system with the forts of the fortress located around the city...

... The attack from the north on January 23 by units of the 39th Guards Rifle, with the powerful support of all available artillery, did not have much success. We did not attack from the west, deliberately leaving the exit here, hoping that

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the enemy will use it and move out of the fortress. But our calculations did not come true: the enemy was not going to leave the city. We understood that we would have to fight for Poznan. It was necessary to reorganize the battle formations, to revive the Stalingrad assault groups and detachments. Riflemen, sappers, flamethrowers, scouts, tankers, artillerymen, who were part of the assault groups, received their specific tasks and, in close cooperation, destroyed one or another enemy center of resistance.

On January 28 we repeated the assault. In addition to the four divisions and reinforcements of the 8th Guards Army, two divisions transferred to my subordination from the 69th Army took part in it. To avoid unnecessary losses, on the eve of the assault, the Nazis were presented with an ultimatum with the following content:

"To the officers and soldiers of the encircled garrison of the city of Poznan. The city of Poznań is surrounded and there is no way out for you. I, General Chuikov, suggest that you immediately lay down your arms and surrender. I guarantee you life and return to your homeland after the war. Otherwise, you will be destroyed, and through your fault, many inhabitants of the city of Poznań will perish along with you. Raise the white flags and march boldly in the direction of our troops."

We did not see white flags. I had to convince the enemy by force of arms. Artillery and aircraft attacked fortifications (we did not touch urban structures). Tanks acted together with infantry units. We spared no shells. From captured trophy stocks. All ground structures of Fort Citadel were swept off the face of the earth. The garrisons of the forts crowded into underground casemates. Our assault groups and detachments received batteries of heavy guns with a caliber of 152 and 203 millimeters for reinforcement.

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By February 5, the assault groups completely cleared the residential areas of the city from the enemy. The citadel, the eastern part of the Shuling district, Khvalishchevo and Glovio were still under siege. On that day, it became known that near the neighbor on the right, the 61st Army, in the area of the Schneidemuhl (Pile) fortress, the enemy armory garrison suddenly attacked the blocking troops at night with all their might. The [1st Tank Brigade. To prevent such attempts on the part of the Poznań garrison of the enemy, we intensified the night operations of the assault groups, and the exits from the forts and ravelins were tightly blocked by artillery fire.

After February 12, the main attention was focused on the Citadel, the center of defense of the Poznań garrison. As our troops approached this center, the stubborn resistance of the enemy increased. You might think: why did you have to fight hard for the Citadel, wouldn't it be better to block it and starve it out? The fact is that next to the Citadel there was a railway junction, which was extremely necessary for the supply of supplies to all the troops of the front. Therefore, the assault on the Citadel continued until the complete elimination of the enemy in it.

In the Citadel itself, about 12,000 soldiers and officers were hiding, led by two commandants - the ex-commandant General Mattern and the seasoned Nazi General Konnel. It was located on a hill, dominated the city. Forts and ravelins were covered with a three-meter layer of earth. The approaches to the inner forts and ravelins were covered by a wide and deep moat. This ditch was shot through by flank fire from the casemates through the loopholes, invisible from the side of the advancing. The walls of the moat, 5-8 meters high, were lined with bricks. Tanks could not overcome this obstacle. Heavy weapons were brought to their aid.

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diya. From a distance of three hundred meters they hit the Citadel. But even 203-mm shells, hitting the walls, did not produce much destruction, and, falling into embankments above the ceilings of forts and casemates, left only funnels.

The general assault, which began on February 18, lasted for four days non-stop, day and night. Flamethrowers were fired into action. However, it was not possible to suppress firing points with the help of knapsack flamethrowers. The flamethrowers could not crawl to the edge of the ditch, and a jet of fire mixture launched from a distance of 20-25 meters did not give any practical results. Then it was decided to use barrels of explosives. Under the cover of infantry fire, 5-6 sappers crawled such a barrel to the edge of the ditch, set fire to the fuse and pushed it towards the embrasures. The explosion deafened the Nazi machine gunners. Taking advantage of the weakening of the fire, the sappers lowered ladders into the ditch and built a crossing. The infantrymen climbed the ramparts by ladders and dug in on its southern slope, and in some places even on the ridge itself.

At 4 pm on February 19, the sappers were given the task of throwing a bridge over the fortress moat, over which regimental artillery could pass. It was decided to build a bridge on gantry supports against breaches in the wall and in the shaft, pierced by high-capacity artillery. With the onset of darkness, the sappers brought pre-prepared parts of the bridge to the moat, but soon the work was interrupted, as the enemy continuously fired at the gap with fast cartridges and machine guns. A new decision is quickly made. As a result of a powerful explosion, redoubt No. 1 fell silent for a while. Sappers took advantage of this. In the dark they built a bridge. True, it did not last long. The enemy destroyed it. By the morning of February 21, the bridge was restored. At noon, they started building a thirty-ton bridge for tanks ...

It was the eve of the Red Army Day. Despite the heavy fighting, people were in a pre-holiday mood,

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it was supported by a premonition of an imminent victory. On the evening of February 22, commanders of corps and divisions gathered in one of the rooms of the city theater.

At this time, the commander of the 74th Guards Rifle Division, General Bakanov, was called to the telephone. Returning, he reported that they called from the central gate of the Citadel. The parliamentarians arrived there. Bakanov asked permission to go and receive them. Soon he reported that the garrison of the fortress was surrendering and that the former commandant of the fortress, General Mattern, was near him. A quarter of an hour later, Major-General Mattern entered the room in which we were sitting, puffing like a steam locomotive and barely squeezing his way in. It was a carcass of eight pounds. After recovering his breath, he handed me a note from the commandant of the fortress, General Connel, who asked the Soviet command to help the wounded.

"Where is Connel himself?"

- Shot himself.

When I asked how General Mattern felt, he shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't care, I'm not a member of the Nazi Party, I wouldn't shed blood in vain, knowing the hopelessness of resistance. Hitler kaput!"

Mattern said that out of 60 thousand German soldiers and officers who were in Poznan, about 12 thousand remained combat-ready. They surrender to the mercy of the winner. In total, 23,500 soldiers and officers were captured in the battles for Poznan. Large trophies were captured.

On the day of the glorious twenty-seventh anniversary of the Red Army - February 23, 1945 - the capital of our Motherland celebrated the victory of the Soviet troops in Poznan with 20 volleys from 224 guns.

So, the last battles and battles have ended on the territory where the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts, with the assistance of the formations of the 2nd Belorussian and 4th Ukrainian fronts, successfully carried out the Vistula-Oder operation.

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FROM THE PROTOCOL OF THE INTERROGATION OF THE COMMANDANT OF THE FORTRESS OF POZNAN, MAJOR GENERAL E. MATTERN, March 9, 1945

Ernst Mattern (Ern% Manern) was born in 1890 in Prussia, professional military man, secondary education, married, has children. He entered military service in 1907. He graduated from the non-commissioned officer school. In the war of 1914-1918. participated as a non-commissioned officer. He received the rank of lieutenant in 1919. From 1920 to 1934 he served in police units. In 1934, he received the rank of major and was in command work in infantry units. In 1937 he was commander of a reserve regiment in Breslavl. In 1940, he received the rank of colonel and was appointed head of the military technical school. In 1941 he commanded the 183rd Infantry Division of the 63rd Infantry Division on the Soviet-German front and was wounded. In 1942, he was commander of a reserve regiment (112th reserve regiment) in France. In 1943 he was commander of the training camp "Vartelager". From October 1944 to January 31, 1945 - commandant of the Poznan fortress. He received the rank of Major General in October 1944.

“Question: Under what circumstances did you surrender?

Answer: By the end of the day on February 22, 1945, my sector of defense was completely isolated. The telephone connection was interrupted, there was no radio connection. I sent messengers twice to the commandant of the fortress, Lieutenant-General Connel, but they could not get through, since all the passages were either occupied by the Russians, or blocked up, or looked through and shot through. I had only about 120 people left to fight. There were a lot of wounded. Fires started that could not be extinguished, in particular, due to lack of water. I decided to capitulate and at dawn sent my adjutant with a white flag, instructing me to tell the Russian command that I was in the infirmary not because I was sick,

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but as a sign that I have ceased resistance and that I am placing myself at the disposal of the Russian command. I learned about Lieutenant General Connel's decision to capitulate only in captivity. I believe that the surrender of the defense sector began regardless of this decision. The assault undertaken by the Russians on February 22, 1945 broke the will of our soldiers and officers to resist.

Question: What is your opinion about the prospects for war?

Answer: The war is lost. This became especially clear to me after the Russians reached the river. Oder. Now there is a finishing off of the prone. Strictly speaking, the loss of the war became certain after the Russians entered the river. Vistula, but then, because none of the Germans wanted defeat, in the hearts of all there was still a hope that the Russians could really be kept on the river. Vistula and achieve a compromise peace. Terrible harbingers of defeat appeared, however, even earlier. Already in 1942-1943.

... February 1945. Lower Silesian Offensive Operation of the troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front (commander - Marshal I.S. Konev). Colonel General Konstantin Vasilievich Krainyukov, a member of the Military Council of the Front, recalls:

“In the course of the Lower Silesian offensive operation, we sought not only and not so much to encircle the German group in the Breslau region, but to break through and crush the enemy defenses at the Oder line, then, with a swift throw, reach the Neisse River and reach the southern approaches to Berlin. This great and difficult task was carried out successfully by the troops of the front.

But we must honestly admit that the enemy fortresses greatly interfered with us, complicating the fulfillment of the main combat mission. We knew very well the intentions of the German fascist

command and did not succumb to his tricks, increased their strikes in the main operational direction. And yet, the 40,000-strong enemy grouping in Breslau partly managed to stretch our

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front and for some time delay the advance of the 5th Guards and 21st Armies. I'm not talking about the 6th Army under the command of General V.A. Gluzdovsky, who had to deal directly with the siege and storming of the fortified city of Breslau, to conduct very heavy street battles there...

The headquarters of the 6th Army, headed by Major General F.D. Kuleshov, developed guidelines for street fighting. The document was reproduced by printing method and sent to all parts. It noted that an offensive battle in a large city is one of the most difficult and requires comprehensive preparation and thorough reconnaissance. It consists of a number of individual attacks, during which small subunits, assault groups and detachments solve independent tasks, capturing certain objects. In urban combat, the assault squad became the main tactical unit. Its composition: a rifle battalion, two 152-mm self-propelled artillery mounts, or two IS tanks, or two 203-mm guns, one battery of 76-mm guns, a destruction group of 14-16 sappers with 800-900 kilograms explosives, an arson group consisting of 12-15 fighters armed with knapsack flamethrowers, as well as a smoke group - 3 people with smoke devices.

_ In fairness, it must be admitted that the first days of the assault on Breslau were unsuccessful for Soviet troops, who suffered heavy losses, but did not capture a single enemy stronghold. Marshal I.S. Konev ordered to stop the assault, to begin the siege of the city of the fortress.

Tactical exercises and combat firing were conducted in units and formations. Particular attention was paid to the formation of assault detachments and groups. Participants of the battles in Ternopil and Przemysl shared their combat experience. Excerpts from the speeches of General V.I. Chuikov:

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"The tactics of the assault group is based on the speed of action, onslaught, broad initiative and audacity of each fighter. Flexibility in tactics is necessary for these groups, because, having burst into a fortified building, having got into a labyrinth of rooms occupied by the enemy, they meet with a mass of surprises. Here comes into force an inexorable rule: have time to turn around! At every step, the fighter is in danger. It doesn't matter - in every corner of the room a grenade, and go! The line from the machine on the remnants of the ceiling; not enough - a grenade, and again forward! Another room - a grenade! Turn - another grenade! Comb automatically. And do not hesitate!

Already inside the object itself, the enemy can go on a counterattack. Don't be afraid! You have already taken the initiative, it is in your hands. Act angrier with a grenade, machine gun, knife and shovel. The fighting inside the house is mad."

Vasily Ivanovich emotionally and figuratively described the frenzied battle full of surprises in the buildings, where in every room and on every stairwell, literally at every step, a soldier is in danger; and the attacking fighter must make his way with fire and a grenade, a knife, a bayonet, a shovel. But the Soviet troops who stormed Breslau had more advanced military equipment, more powerful weapons than the defenders of Stalingrad. This made certain adjustments to the tactics of urban combat.

Thus, the siege of Breslau was not passive. Artillery hit the enemy. The assault groups also acted continuously. Such activity was achieved through reserve assault groups and second echelons. This greatly exhausted and exhausted the enemy, lowered his combat capability. The decisive offensive actions of the ground forces were reinforced

massive air strikes. Wanting to avoid bloodshed, the Soviet command issued an ultimatum. We assumed that the Hitlerite generals would try to hide from the masses of soldiers to

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a document containing in its basis humane proposals. The Soviet command guaranteed the life and safety of all German soldiers, officers and generals who stopped resisting.

As it became known later, Field Marshal Scherner, who headed the German fascist army group Center, categorically forbade the Breslau defense commander, General of Infantry K. Nyckhof, by radio, to accept an ultimatum and enter into any negotiations with us. Nazi Field Marshal F. Scherner, who planned to alleviate the fate of his group, ordered the garrison of the Breslau fortress to break through to the south, to join his troops. He even promised to strike back with the forces of the 17th German Army. The Nazis made several reconnaissance attempts, but to no avail.

Did Scherner believe in the success of the breakthrough? This question is difficult to answer. At first, the 40,000-strong Breslau garrison was doomed to death by Adolf Hitler. Then Scherner continued his vile business. And he preferred to throw thousands of German soldiers into the meat grinder, just to prevent them from surrendering to captivity.

Meanwhile, the ultimatum expired. From the dawn of May 6, after 81 days of siege, Soviet troops rushed at the enemy with all their might. At 18:45, the fortress capitulated. The number of prisoners exceeded 38 thousand soldiers and officers. The irretrievable losses of the Soviet troops amounted to more than 800 people.

Thus, having already entered the territory of Eastern Europe, the Soviet troops received a new serious problem associated with the assault on fortress cities, which were based on ancient defensive structures and stone buildings. In such cities, the enemy got the opportunity to defend himself not only in a large stone structure, but also in everyone

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building. There was a need to prepare and conduct street battles, which required special tactics for actions by assault detachments and assault groups. This tactic made increased demands on the organization and conduct of combat, on maintaining interaction between troops operating in disparate directions, and on managing dissimilar

forces.

STORM OF BUDAPEST

The last military autumn of 1944 came. The Red Army successfully advanced on the entire Soviet-German front. On September 23, 1944, the advanced units of the left wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front (commanded by Colonel General R. Ya. Malinovsky) entered the territory of Hungary in the area of the city of Battonya (95 km east of the Tisza River near the city of Szeged). They tried to develop an offensive inland, but, faced with the most stubborn opposition from the enemy, they advanced slowly. By the end of the month, the Soviet troops managed to expand the breakthrough to 80 km, advance from 5 to 20 km, and capture the cities of Elek and Mako. But they weren't strong enough for more.

Hungary was one of Germany's allies in World War II, until December 1944 it was a kingdom without a king. The state was ruled by a temporary ruler, former rear admiral M. Horthy, who was proclaimed regent in 1920. In 1939 Hungary joined

to the Anti-Comintern Pact, and then to the Berlin Pact of 1940, participated in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, in the attack on Yugoslavia and the USSR. For loyalty to the Third Reich, Hungary received part of Slovakia, Transcarpathian Ukraine, Northern Transylvania and part of Yugoslavia.

With the approach of the Red Army to the territory of Rumania, the rulers of Hungary began to pursue a policy of balancing, calculated on the support of the United States and England in the event that Germany lost the war. Berlin, to prevent these hesitation, March 19, 1944

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ordered his troops to occupy Hungary. The German ambassador E. Wesenmeier arrived in Budapest, who, in fact, became the all-powerful Hitlerite governor in the country.

Troops loyal to Horthy were brought up to Budapest, the possibility of establishing contacts with the Soviet advanced units and joint actions of the armies against the Nazis was groped. On October 15, 1944, M. Horthy spoke on national radio and announced the country's withdrawal from the war, the conclusion of a preliminary truce by Hungary and the appointment of a new commander of the Hungarian army.

However, the plans for the withdrawal of Hungary from the war were not destined to come true. The Nazis, seeking to prevent the loss of the last serious ally and relying on the Arrow Cross party close to them, decided to carry out a coup d'état and establish a fascist pro-Hitler regime. In the morning of October 15, a special detachment of the Gestapo, led by a seasoned saboteur O. Skorzeny, under the pretext of meeting with Yugoslav partisans, lured Horthy Jr. into a trap, who was taken out of the country, and then ended up in the Mauthausen concentration camp. Horthy's son became an instrument of blackmail and pressure on the 76-year-old regent. Almost simultaneously with this action, the Chief of the General Staff of the Wehrmacht sent an ultimatum to the Chief of the General Staff of the Hungarian army with a demand to immediately cancel the recently issued order to the Hungarian units to open the front line in front of the Soviet troops.

On October 16, 1944, saving his life and the life of his family, M. Horthy signed in the royal palace a document on renunciation of power and transfer of the post of head of state to a Hitler protégé — a retired colonel of the General Staff, the leader of the Hungarian fascists F. Salashi. Horthy, along with his family, was taken to Germany, where he was kept under the "guard" of the Gestapo.

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The action to withdraw Hungary from the war was insufficiently prepared in military and organizational respects: neither Horthy's statement on the radio, nor the order for the troops contained indications of specific actions. For most supporters of a break with Germany, the events of October 15 came as a surprise. And although these events, as stated in one of the police reports, "set in motion organizations of the Resistance in Budapest", which united "most of the workers, left-wing circles and those social forces that consider it inexpedient to continue the war", the forces of the Hungarian anti-fascists turned out to be too weak and fragmented to offer worthy resistance to the Nazis and the putschists.

Even such devoted supporters of Hungary's withdrawal from the war as the commanders of the 1st and 2nd Hungarian armies failed to resort to decisive and independent actions. General L. Veres was arrested a few hours after the start of the putsch. The same fate awaited General B. Dalno-ki-Miklos. However, at that time, he, along with his chief of staff, was in negotiations at the location of the headquarters of the 4th Ukrainian Front. Therefore, Miklós from there turned to his soldiers, urging them to turn their weapons against the Germans. However, only about 10,000 soldiers responded to this call.

The Salashist coup, the establishment of an open fascist regime and measures to "restore order" led to the arrest of thousands of anti-fascists from a wide variety of population groups. special

communists, leftist social democrats and trade unionists were persecuted. F. Salashi, who called himself the "leader of the party", fulfilled all the wishes of the Nazis. He promised Hitler to field up to one and a half million soldiers, obliged the entire population from 14 to 70 years of age to do forced labor for military purposes.

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Relying on the Salashists, the Germans managed to quickly change the commanders of the armies, commanders of formations and units that they did not like, establish control over the Hungarian armed forces and carry out total mobilization. This caused an increase in the resistance of the Hungarian troops at the front. At the same time, Hitler transferred parts of four tank divisions to Budapest. Such a cruel attitude of Germany towards its last fighting ally in Europe was determined not only by military-political, but also by economic considerations. The fact is that after the loss of Ploiesti and Romania, 80% of the oil in the Reich came from Hungarian and Austrian sources. Without this oil, Germany would not have been able to continue the war.

In order to prevent the breakthrough of the Red Army into Hungary, Austria and South Germany, as well as to ensure the withdrawal of German troops from Greece, Albania and the southern regions of Yugoslavia, the Nazi command urgently created defenses on the border of Hungary with Romania and Bulgaria. This task was entrusted to the troops of the Army Group "South" under the command of General G. Frisner (since December 28 - General O. Wehler) and part of the forces of Army Group "F" (commander - Field Marshal M. Weichs). This grouping included the 6th and 8th German, 2nd and 3rd Hungarian armies, which had 3500 guns and mortars, 300 tanks and 550 aircraft.

At the same time, the Nazi command urgently built defensive structures on the paths of a possible offensive by the Red Army. The troops and the local population along the border and in the depths of the country built or several lines of defense: the first - on the border, the second - on the western bank of the Tisza and the third - on the right bank of the Danube. The system of the latter also included the Fortifications created on the outskirts of Budapest. And to the south-west of the Hungarian capital, the "Line

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Margarita" along the line: Lake Balaton and Velence to the bend of the Danube near the city of Vitz, further to the Czechoslovak border, this line consisted of three lines of defense. Thus, the territory of the last ally of the Third Reich in Europe was thoroughly prepared to repel the attacks of the Red Army, whose troops were approaching the borders of Hungary.

In order to prevent the Red Army from entering Hungary, the German command planned to inflict a series of counterattacks. In the directive of the German General Staff of the Ground Forces of September 30, Army Group South was tasked with a strike from the Debrecen area to defeat the Soviet troops that had reached the Romanian-Hungarian border in the area between Oradea and Mako and reach such a line that could be held during the winter by insignificant forces. After that, it was supposed to regroup troops to strike in a southerly direction in order to capture the exits from the Southern Carpathians. By such actions it was thought to close the way for the Russian units to Northern Transylvania and the Middle Danube lowland.

In the current situation, the tasks of the Soviet troops were also clarified. On October 3, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command ordered the 2nd Ukrainian Front to strike in the northern and northwestern directions, bypassing the Hungarian city of Debrecen from the west and east.

At the same time, the Headquarters transferred the 46th Army to the front, and also reinforced its troops with mechanized and two cavalry corps, an artillery breakthrough division, aviation and marching reinforcements.

Commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, Marshal R.Ya. Malinovsky, having received instructions from the Headquarters, immediately began preparing the first offensive operation on the territory of Hungary,

called Debrecenskaya and carried out without any operational pause. According to the plan, the main blow dealt

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Xia in the center of the front with the forces of the 53rd combined arms, 6th guards tank, 1st Romanian armies and the cavalry-mechanized group of General I.A. Plieva from the area south of Oradea, Battonya in the direction of Debrecen. The troops of the right wing of the front continued to advance in the rear of the East Carpathian grouping of the enemy, and the left wing ensured the offensive of the main forces of the front from the south.

By the beginning of the operation, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front outnumbered the enemy: in men - 3 times, in guns and mortars - 2.9 times, in tanks and self-propelled guns - 2.5 times, and in aircraft - 2 times. But, despite such a significant advantage, many difficulties awaited them: in a number of sectors they had to advance in mountainous and wooded areas, fight in settlements with solid stone buildings turned into powerful defense units.

The Debrecen operation began on October 6, 1944. During it, the 53rd Army of General I.M. successfully operated. Managarov and the horse-mechanized group of General I.A. Pliev. Already on the first day they broke through the main line of defense and by the end of the third day of the offensive they advanced 100 km to the north. The actions of the 6th Guards Tank Army of General A.G. Kravchenko were extremely unsuccessful. Advancing in the first echelon, she met very strong enemy resistance, lost a significant number of tanks and could not advance to the city of Oradea for a whole week. In such an environment, Marshal R.Ya. Malinovsky was forced to divert the main forces of General Pliev from the task of attacking Debrecen. He turned them sharply to the southeast. By the end of October 12, Pliev's group, in cooperation with the 33rd Rifle Corps, captured the city of Oradea, a powerful enemy stronghold in the Debrecen direction.

By the same time, Soviet troops had cleared the Hungarian left bank of the Tisza south of Debrecen,

5 Assaults of the Great Patriotic

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bodied Szeged and Cluj. Moving in the direction of Satu Mare, Chop, they contributed to the offensive of the 4th Ukrainian Front in the Carpathians. On October 20, the troops of the center of the 2nd Ukrainian Front captured Debrecen. The advanced units of the Pliev group reached the river. Tisza and cut off the escape routes of the 1st, 2nd Hungarian and 8th German armies.

To avoid encirclement, the enemy launched a counterattack with the forces of two tank corps on the flanks of Pliev's group and cut its communications south of Nyiregyhaza. After heavy five-day fighting, the Soviet troops left Nyiregyhaza and on October 27 joined the main forces of the front.

By the end of October 28, the troops under the command of Marshal R.Ya. Malinovsky, overcoming the strong opposition of the German-Hungarian formations, approached the Tisza on the right wing, reached the eastern bank of the river in the central section, and crossed it on the left wing. At the same time, in the interfluvium of the Tisza-Danube, a large bridgehead was captured - about 120 km along the front and from 20 to 100 km in depth. Within 23 days they advanced 130-275 km and created the prerequisites for an attack on Budapest. Interacting with the formations of the Hungarian army, the Soviet troops defeated 10 enemy divisions, capturing more than 42 thousand people. The losses of the 2nd Ukrainian Front in the Debrecen operation amounted to over 84 thousand people.

The exit of Soviet formations to the Debrecen area forced the Nazi command to begin the withdrawal of its troops in front of the center and left wing of the 4th Ukrainian Front in the Carpathians. Here, with part of the headquarters, the commander of the 1st Hungarian Army, General B.

Miklos, who gave the order to his subordinate units to stop resistance and raise the white flag.

At the suggestion of Marshal of the Soviet Union S.K. Tymoshenko with Miklos's order across the line

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front, ten captured Hungarian officers were sent. However, the hopes of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command for a truce and Hungary's withdrawal from the war did not come true. In the twentieth of October, Soviet intelligence received reliable information about Hitler's punitive measures taken against Hungary, about the removal of Horthy, about the order to the troops of the Hungarian army of Salashi appointed in his place to fight to the last with the Soviet troops. And this order was strictly carried out. Based on this, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command ordered the Soviet troops "to act on the battlefield against the Hungarian troops in the same way as against the German ones."

With the Red Army advancing from the east and south advancing towards the center of the country, the underground patriotic forces launched preparations for a nationwide uprising. On November 9, 1944, the Liberation Committee of the Hungarian National Uprising (OKHNV) was formed. It was headed by the well-known anti-fascist E. Baichi-Zhyllinski, who managed to escape from the fascist prison. With the participation of the military, an uprising plan was developed, which provided for the expulsion of the Nazis from the country with the support of the Red Army. It was also planned to create an independent and democratic Hungary, carry out fundamental social changes and establish close cooperation with the USSR.

By mid-November, despite the criticism of the Communists who were part of the Hungarian Front, the uprising plan was ready. A special military headquarters of the OKVNV was formed, the necessary contacts were established, the corresponding army and police, as well as work detachments were created, primarily in the capital, special attention was paid to establishing close contacts with the command of the 2nd Ukrainian Front.

On November 19, 1944, Baichi-Zhyllinski also prepared a special message for the top Soviet leadership, in which it was proposed to agree on the following problems:

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mi troops; 2) the transition of the Hungarian units to the side of the Red Army and the formation of a separate army from them with the Hungarian command, which would later take part in joint battles against the Nazis within the framework of the Soviet army; 3) the inclusion of prisoners of war in the Hungarian liberation army; 4) creation of work detachments and partisan formations from among volunteers, their armament; 5) establishing the necessary connection between the Soviet troops and the Hungarian insurgent units in the Budapest area.

However, the Nazis managed to get on the trail of the leaders of the impending uprising. On November 22, 1944, his headquarters was arrested. On December 6-8, 1944, the main "instigators" - E. Baichi Zhilinski and his 10 comrades, including General J. Kiss, Colonel of the General Staff V. Tartshai, Colonel Y. Nagy and others - appeared before the military court. The named persons were sentenced to death, which happened, and the rest - to 10-15 years in prison.

Thus was put an end to the plans of the Hungarian anti-fascist uprising. In the future, the decapitated national anti-fascist movement, in the absence of another authoritative, influential, organizing and mobilizing force, could rely mainly only on scattered small groups of armed resistance, as well as on partisan struggle, organized mainly by the command of the Red Army with the involvement of Hungarians who underwent special training in anti-fascist schools of partisan struggle on the territory of the USSR. Since August 1944, these schools have sent more than [0 mixed

Soviet-Hungarian parachute detachments for the deployment of the partisan movement in the field. Only one such school in Obarovo (then transferred to Svyatoshino near Kiev) until the end of 1944 under

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660 Hungarian "professional" partisans, who also knew subversive work, were brought together.

The most tangible blows against the enemy were inflicted by partisan detachments and formations on the territory of Hungary under the command of F. Pataky, D. Usta, S. Nogradi, and others.

In the industrial region of Miskolc-Diosgyor, as well as in the area of Budapest, in the mining settlements around Nograd, Doroga and Tabani, partisan groups, detachments and formations of civil subordination successfully fought. As Colonel-General of the Wehrmacht G. Frisner later wrote, the Hungarian partisans operating in the east and north-east of the country were of particular concern to the Germans. Recalling the battles for the city of Miskolc, he noted: "When the fighting began on the outskirts of this large industrial city, over 20 thousand local workers rose in revolt ... Obviously, they wanted to transfer industrial enterprises into Soviet hands, if possible, intact daily form. At night they organized raids on our

positions..."

In addition, in the battles near Miskolc, according to the command of the Red Army, about 600 Hungarian partisans took part shoulder to shoulder with the Soviet soldiers. The resistance of the population to the Germans manifested itself not only in the protection of industrial enterprises from dismantling, from the export of factory equipment to Germany, but also in sabotage, failure to appear at recruiting stations and in the active actions of sabotage groups.

The fighting of the Red Army, which unfolded in the east and south of the country, was perceived by the population as inevitable measures to cleanse the country of the invaders. It lived by faith in the speedy end of the war and therefore met the Soviet troops as liberators, but at the same time experienced a feeling of fear and anxiety. Command of the Red Army in a special

calling

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The Institute assured the population that it was entering the Hungarian land "not as a conqueror, but as a liberator of the Hungarian people from the German fascist yoke, that the Red Army did not pursue other goals than the defeat of the Nazi troops, did not intend to break local orders and establish own, guarantees the inviolability of private property and the preservation of local authorities, etc." This calmed and encouraged the population.

At the same time, in the eastern regions of the country, after their liberation, there were facts of gathering and summoning the male population aged 15 to 55 years, allegedly for "three days of restoration work", which, however, ended in their deportation to the USSR. This fate befell about 40-60 thousand people, most of whom never returned home. Rumors about this leaked across the front line, which was used by Hitler's propaganda to stir up passions and gave rise to talk about either the eviction of the population behind the front line to Siberia, or the destruction of people remaining "in the zone of the Reds". Fearing such a fate, at the initial stage of the battles for Hungary, about half of the citizens of such large cities as Nyiregyhaza, Debrecen and Szeged, before the arrival of the Red Army, left their homes and evacuated to the central regions of the country, retreating before the front line. Soon, however, the mass exodus from the cities stopped when the inevitable defeat of the Nazis became obvious and explanatory work among the population was intensified. It was carried out both by Soviet political agencies and by representatives of the Communist Party who had returned from the USSR to their homeland to establish a peaceful life.

On December 11, 1944, the Hungarian delegation headed by G. Farago, sent to Moscow by Horthy, again signed the preliminary terms of the armistice. In the liberated Debrecen there were

created by the multi-party

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based on the Provisional National Assembly of Hungary and formed the Provisional Government of the country headed by General B. Miklós, which adopted the "Program for the Democratic Restoration of Hungary". This happened not only with the knowledge, but also with the direct participation of the Soviet authorities. Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the USSR Dekanozov recommended on December 6 to a member of the Military Council of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, Colonel General I.Z. Susaykov and political adviser to the commissioner of the USSR government in Hungary G.M. Pushkin "to have an absolutely reliable person in his capacity as deputy chairman of the Provisional National Assembly in order to influence the entire course of the work of the assembly." In a note addressed to Stalin, the same Dekanozov reported on December 22: "The composition of the Hungarian government and the text of the government declaration have been adopted in full accordance with the projects we have outlined."

The Provisional Government, which included representatives of 4 parties (Communist, Social Democratic, Independent Party of Small Farmers and the National Peasant Party) and well-known personalities in the country, including the highest Horthy officers who went over to the side of the Soviet troops, in part G. Farago, December 28 declared war on Germany. On the same day, a delegation went to Moscow, which on January 20, 1945, on behalf of the new government, signed an armistice agreement. In accordance with this document, Hungary undertook to provide material and armed assistance in the defeat of fascism, to pay reparations in favor of the USSR, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, to bear the costs of maintaining the Allied Control Commission (JCC) and to comply with all its instructions and orders.

In connection with the signing of the agreement, a representative of the Soviet command, who studied the situation on the spot, reported to Moscow in May 1945 the following:

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"The most important factor influencing the political mood of the population is the expected and then signed armistice agreement between the Soviet Union and Hungary. In itself, the fact that this agreement was concluded caused universal approval. The terms of the truce are regarded by the population as difficult, but fair and feasible. The exceptions are the clauses of the agreement on reparations and on Northern Transylvania. Many Hungarians believe that, given the current economic situation in the country, Hungary is unable to pay 300 million US dollars, or that it will be able to pay this amount only if it receives help from outside. The opinion is also expressed that the question of Northern Transylvania should be reviewed over time in favor of Hungary. This assessment of the situation and the mood of the population quite accurately reflected the reality.

The creation of the Provisional Government was supposed to contribute to the process of liberation of the territories of the country still occupied by the Germans. With the completion of the Debrecen operation, the Headquarters ordered Marshal Malinovsky to immediately launch an offensive against the Hungarian capital with the forces of the 46th Army. R.Ya. Malinovsky in a telephone conversation with I.V. Stalin, in order to better prepare the Budapest operation, asked to delay its start for several days, but "the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, referring to political conditions, insisted on an immediate offensive."

In the area of the Hungarian capital, the enemy created a line of defense well equipped in terms of engineering. Defensive structures covered the city from the east in semi-arcs and rested their flanks on the Danube. According to Soviet intelligence, Budapest was prepared for a long siege, the main forces of Army Group Center and parts of the Hungarian troops were concentrated in its area. They had significant reserves

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weapons, ammunition, food, medical and other property.

To coordinate the plan to capture Budapest, Marshal S.K. Timoshenko invited the front commanders. After listening to their proposals, Timoshenko decided:

"We will bypass Budapest from the south and north, aiming minimal forces for a frontal strike. As far as I know, the forthcoming talks between Stalin and Molotov with Churchill and Eden in Moscow will require a speedy solution of the Hungarian problem. Therefore, one should not count on a long preparation for the operation. It is necessary to sharply intensify the offensive in the zone of the 4th Ukrainian Front, especially in the junction with the 40th Army. The terrain and the weather are not conducive to this. It is necessary to use aviation as much as possible, including for the delivery of various cargoes to the troops.

On October 29, the 46th Army under the command of General I.T. Shlemina broke through the defenses and, having entered the mechanized corps, began a rapid advance. By the end of November 3, the 4th and 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps of V.I. Zhdanova and K.V. Sviridov were only 15 km from Budapest, but they could not enter the city on the move. The enemy defense held out. In addition, the German command quickly transferred three tank and one motorized divisions to Budapest, which, having occupied defensive lines, were able to stop the advance of the Soviet troops.

On November 4, the Headquarters of the Supreme Command demanded that Malinovsky speed up the withdrawal of the front troops to the right bank of the Tisza in order to defeat the enemy's Budapest grouping with strikes from the north, northeast and south. Fulfilling these instructions, the troops of the front on November 11 resumed the offensive. It lasted 16 days. However, it was not possible to cut and defeat the Budapest grouping to the east of the city. The second attempt to capture Budapest was unsuccessful.

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November 24 S.K. Timoshenko sent an explanation to the Headquarters of the Supreme Command about the reasons for the delay of Soviet troops near Budapest. He accused the command of the 2nd Ukrainian Front of irrational dispersion of forces in several directions, which prevented them from concentrating their efforts on solving the main task.

The Headquarters agreed with Timoshenko's arguments and on November 26 demanded that the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front create a significant superiority of forces over the enemy in the decisive direction, concentrating breakthrough artillery divisions and tank formations here. More active tasks to defeat the Hungarian group were also assigned to the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front. Timoshenko himself was given instructions: "Due to the fact that the 4th Ukrainian Front is not fulfilling its assigned tasks, and its offensive would facilitate the offensive of the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, the Headquarters suggests that you immediately leave for Petrov and make him complete the task.

The operation of the 2nd Ukrainian Front was scheduled to begin on December 5 or 6. It became the property of the enemy. Literally a day after the order of Marshal R.Ya. Malinovsky on the organization of the offensive, General Frisner, in a directive to the commander of the 6th Army, stating the regrouping of Soviet troops that had begun, noted "a change in the operational plans of the Russian command" and his intention "to force the Danube between Budapest and Lake Balaton in a northerly direction".

On December 5, 1944, the 2nd Ukrainian Front resumed its offensive. For eight days, the troops of the center and the left wing tried to surround the enemy by turning around from the north and southwest. At the same time, the mobile formations of the front reached the river border with Czechoslovakia. Ipel, together with the 7th Guards Army of General M.S. Shumilov reached the left bank of the Danube near the town of Vitz (20 km north of Budapest) and, advancing from

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Vitsa in a southerly direction, overcame the first and second lanes of the outer bypass of Budapest. At the same time, the 46th Army crossed the Danube 15 km south of Budapest and captured a bridgehead

14 km in size along the front and 10-16 km in depth. But due to the lack of forces and the fierce resistance of the enemy, she could not reach the Hungarian capital from the south-west. Thus, the third attempt to capture Budapest was not successful either.

At this time, the troops of Marshal F.I. Tolbukhin were completing the regrouping from the Belgrade to the Budapest direction. Their complete concentration in the area of the cities of Baia, Makhach, Sombor (135-180 km south of Budapest) was completed by 25-26 November. In parallel with the process of regrouping, the front part of its forces crossed the Danube in the area of concentration and captured an important bridgehead. Relying on it, the 57th and 4th Guards armies of Generals M.N. Sharokhin and G.F. Zakharov went on the offensive on November 27, liberated the Transdanubian part of Hungary and Yugoslav territory in the interfluvium of the Danube, Drava, and by December 9 reached the line of Lake Velence, oz. Balaton, Barch (80 km south of Lake Balaton). This created a real opportunity to strike at the rear of the Budapest grouping of the enemy from the west. In order to prepare such a strike, Marshal Tolbukhin ordered the troops of the front to gain a foothold on the achieved lines in front of the enemy defensive line "Margarita".

By the moment under consideration, the German command, at the expense of the OKH reserve, new formations and regrouping, increased the composition of Army Group South from 38 to 51 divisions and brigades. Nevertheless, the enemy was inferior to the Soviet troops in terms of forces and means. Thus, the Shock Group of the 3rd Ukrainian Front outnumbered the enemy in men by 3.3 times, in guns - by 4.8 times, in tanks and self-propelled guns - by 3.5 times.

At the same time, the pace of construction of defensive lines, stretching from north to south, increased. Special

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but much attention was paid to the construction of fortified positions in the area of the city of Budapest itself, the so-called line of Atilla. Its construction began in August 1944 and continued almost until January 1945. Three horseshoe-shaped defensive belts were built, which covered Budapest from the east. The ends of the "horseshoes" rested on the Danube to the north and south of the city.

The first lane ran at a distance of 25-30 km from the Danube and consisted of 3-5 continuous trenches, interconnected by communication passages. In front of this strip, barbed wire was installed along its entire length, anti-tank ditches were dug for a considerable length and minefields were laid.

The second lane ran at a distance of 5-12 km from the first and consisted of one to three continuous lines of trenches, covered with barbed wire and, in some areas, with minefields. The third lane, passing through the suburbs of Budapest, included from 3 to 6-7 lines of trenches, tightly covered with barbed wire and minefields. In addition, the enemy made extensive use of stone structures and railroad tracks for defense. Thus, he managed to create a continuous zone of defensive structures 25-30 km deep to the east of the city.

Assessing the composition and distribution of German and Hungarian troops in directions, the Soviet command came to the conclusion that the enemy intends not only to keep Budapest behind him, but also to prevent the Red Army from entering Czechoslovakia and Austria. In this situation, on December 2, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command decided, first of all, to defeat the Budapest grouping and capture the city of Budapest with the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts. To this end, she ordered Marshal Malinovsky to transfer the 46th Army to the disposal of Marshal Tolbukhin from Wednesday

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reinforcement and set tasks for both fronts to prepare for joint actions.

The essence of the plan was to break through the enemy defenses north and southwest of Budapest with the forces of two fronts and, advancing towards each other, surround the enemy grouping, and then capture the city with simultaneous attacks from the west and east.

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The plan of the Soviet command to capture the city of Budapesht (Plan "Whirlwind")

After analyzing the intelligence data received, the commander of the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, in agreement with Marshal S.K. Timoshenko and the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command postponed the transition to the offensive.

At the direction of the Headquarters (directive of December 12, 1944), the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts were to deliver frontal attacks on the enemy's defenses in two sectors - north and southwest of Bu-Dapest, to develop a breakthrough by tank formations on- Meeting each other and, applying operational coverage and about

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move, surround the enemy grouping in Budapest. At the same time, they were to strike at each other with adjacent formations and capture Budapest. The offensive was planned to begin on December 19-20.

Thus, the defeat of the Budapest grouping of the enemy was supposed to be carried out by encircling it and subsequent destruction by the forces of two fronts. The commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front was supposed to strike a front strike group consisting of two tank armies and General Pliev's mechanized cavalry group to strike from the Shakhi area with the task of reaching the northern bank of the Danube and preventing the enemy grouping from retreating to the north. west. The 3rd Ukrainian Front was to use the forces of two combined arms armies, two mechanized, one tank and one cavalry corps to strike from the region of Lake Velice to the north, reach the southern bank of the Danube and cut off the enemy's retreat to the west.

The offensive, which began on December 20, developed successfully. In the zone of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, the 6th Panzer Army, having broken through the enemy defenses on its own, began to rapidly advance in a northwestern direction.

But the enemy also reacted quite quickly to the success of the Soviet troops. On December 21, he launched a counterattack with tanks and infantry in the general direction of Shaakhi. The attack, which also continued on December 22 and 23, involved units of three tank divisions (about 125 tanks). Simultaneously with this counterattack, the fascists also went on the offensive in secondary directions. Having broken through the front of the right-flank formations of the 7th Guards Army, by the end of December 22, the enemy grouping entered the area with tank units, from where the offensive of the 6th Guards Tank Army had begun two days before.

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But, inflicting a counterattack, the enemy put his left flank under attack. The commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front took advantage of this. On December 21, he ordered the commander of the 6th Guards Tank Army, covering part of the forces from the north, with the main forces to strike south, along the eastern bank of the Gron River, in order to, in cooperation with the 7th Guards Army, encircle and destroy the enemy grouping in the interfluvium of Ipel and Gron.

On December 22, the tank army went to the rear of the enemy's Sakalosh strike group. Its sharp turn to the south gave a very sharp character to the struggle that unfolded in the interfluvium. Soviet tankmen, destroying the manpower and military equipment of the enemy, stubbornly advanced in the indicated direction and on December 26 approached the mouth of the Gron River. On the same day, mobile troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front entered the area from the south. The troops of both fronts joined up on the outer front line of the encirclement of the Budapest grouping of the enemy.

On December 27, the encirclement of enemy units operating in the interfluvium of the Grón and Ipeľ was completed. In the next three days, this grouping, which consisted of four infantry regiments and up to 70 tanks, was completely destroyed.

As a result of the main operation, when, by the end of December 26, the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts united near Esztergom (35 km northwest of Budapest), the encirclement of the 188,000th enemy group (about 10 divisions and a number of units of military branches) was completed. Only the task of capturing the western part of the Hungarian capital remained unfulfilled, which the enemy turned into a powerful fortified area.

A. Hitler, being dissatisfied with the actions of Generals I. Frisner and K. Freyer, on December 24 appointed General O. We

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Lera, and the commander of the 6th Army - General of Tank Forces M. Balk. At the same time, there was a constant strengthening of the grouping of troops of Army Group South. If by the beginning of the Debrecen operation, the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts were opposed by 4 tank and 3 motorized divisions, then by the end of 1944, 13 tank and 2 motorized divisions were already operating against them.

On December 28, the new commander of Army Group South in an operational directive, pointing out that a further offensive of Soviet troops should be expected on both sides of the Danube to the west, as well as against the 8th Army, determined the further tasks of his formations. The 2nd Panzer Army was to create a deep defense "from the front line to the Margarita position" and "to prevent an enemy breakthrough in the direction of the oil region." The army group "Balk" was supposed to prevent the breakthrough of Soviet troops south and north of the Danube before the arrival of reinforcements. The garrison of Budapest was asked to "hold out until the moment of liberation from siege."

On December 29, the command of both fronts, in order to avoid further bloodshed and the destruction of Budapest, presented an ultimatum to the encircled troops to surrender. However, the enemy command not only rejected this humane act, but also ordered the assassination of truce truant captains M. Steinmetz and I.A. Ostapenko, having committed a blatant act of dishonor and violation of international law on the immunity of parliamentarians. Then the Soviet troops began to eliminate the encircled enemy. But this process turned out to be lengthy.

The German command, having concentrated near Budapest almost half of all tank and motorized divisions available on the Soviet-German front, in the period from 2 to 26 January launched three strong counterattacks on the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front.

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In the fierce battles that unfolded, the troops of Marshal Tolbukhin, despite the superiority of the German troops in tanks, not only stopped their advance, but also threw them back to their original positions. A significant role in this was played by the skillful maneuver of the Soviet troops, the rapid creation of new defensive lines on the enemy's spreading routes, and the offensive of the troops of the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front in the direction of Komarno, in the rear of the counterattack grouping about

tivnik.

Fighting in the streets of Budapest

Directly in the city, the battles were fought by a specially created Budapest group of troops, headed by General I.M. Afonin (from January 22 - General I.M. Managarov). It consisted of four rifle corps from both fronts and, until January 18, one Romanian army corps. The battles for the liberation of the eastern part of the city (Pest) went on from December 27 to January 18, and

its western part (Buda) - from January 20 to February 13. The conditions of the assault were a severe test for the inhabitants

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Budapest. The commander of the 9th SS Corps, who was in the besieged capital, characterizing their mood, wrote the following with apprehension in his diary on January 10: "The civilian population is in an extremely agitated state. People practically do not receive food, large blocks of the city are left without water, lighting ... discontent is growing."

Although the offensive of the Soviet troops developed slowly, the position of the encircled enemy was getting worse and worse. If at first 40-45 aircraft daily delivered the necessary cargo for him, then from January 20 the supply was disrupted by Soviet aviation.

On the night of January 21, the Headquarters of the All-Russian Supreme Command sent a telegram stating: "Assign Marshal Timoshenko to coordinate the actions of the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts." After that, the actions of these two associations became more coordinated and effective. The enemy, pinned down in Budapest, was continuously subjected to artillery fire and air strikes, periodically reconnaissance probed his defenses and shattered the actions of small infantry detachments. To conduct combat operations in such conditions became more and more difficult.

On February 4, before dawn, Lieutenant General Pfeffer Wildenbruch, commander of the defense of Budapest, received a telegram. He hoped that Berlin had given permission for the surrender of the encircled group. But instead I read that "in connection with the successes of the German troops near Budapest" the Fuhrer conferred on him the rank of Colonel General of the SS troops and awarded him the Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross. Other officers of the Budapest group were also awarded high awards.

It seemed like a vicious mockery of people. The commander immediately recalled the case of the promotion of General Paulus, who was surrounded with the 6th Army near Stalingrad, in the military rank, and other illogical

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Fuhrer's steps. But he can no longer do anything about Hitler's whims or with the real situation. could.

On February 13, on the hill of Buda, near the castle and the royal palace, the last shots were fired. The commander of the defense of the Hungarian capital, having lost all hope, ordered the white flag to be thrown out of the basement of the military school, where the remains of his headquarters were located. The last stronghold in Southeastern Europe fell under the blows of Soviet weapons. The enemy in Budapest lost up to 50,000 killed and 138,000 captured.

The Budapest operation is over. During this operation, Soviet troops advanced from 120 to 240 km, liberated about 45% of the territory of Hungary (and taking into account the Debrecen operation - 74%) and created the conditions for a further offensive in Czechoslovakia.

The most important result of this operation was the fact that the Soviet troops forced the German command to transfer to the southern flank of the Soviet-German front a large number of units, especially tank and motorized ones, which were extremely necessary for him to repel the offensive of the Red Army on Warsaw Berlin direction in January-February 1945.

These results were achieved at a high price. The human losses of the Soviet troops amounted to 320,082 people, of which 80,082 were irretrievable (taking into account the Debrecen operation, respectively, 404,092 and 99,739 people). In addition, during the fighting they lost 1,766 tanks and self-propelled guns, 4,127 guns and mortars, and 293 combat aircraft.

The population of the Hungarian capital, which survived not only the fascist occupation, but also 108 difficult days of the blockade, greeted the Soviet soldiers with relief, albeit with conflicting feelings. The influence of fascist propaganda, which instilled fear in the population and depicted Soviet soldiers in the form of "red devils", as well as rumors about Stalin's camps and the activities of the NKVD, had an effect. At the same time, the information that "there are Hungarians among the Russian liberators" who went over to their side gave people hope.

In the battles for the liberation of Buda, many Hungarian soldiers and officers took part, who voluntarily went over to the side of the Soviet troops. According to the memoirs of General S.M. Shtemenko, these Hungarian volunteer soldiers "would match their deeds". It was from their number, according to incomplete data, that about 600 people died a heroic death in the battles for the liberation of Budapest from the invaders. The rest of the Hungarian volunteers - a total of about 3200 people - formed the basis of the Buda Volunteer Regiment under the command of Colonel O. Variohazy.

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The destruction of the German group in the Hungarian capital hastened the process of expelling the Nazi occupiers from the country, intensified the unrest in the Hungarian army, the transition of its soldiers to the partisans or to the side of the Red Army. The total number of Hungarians who, with weapons in their hands, fought on the side of the Soviet troops against the Germans, according to the estimates of Hungarian historians, was approximately 6-6.5 thousand people.

But do not forget that together with the German troops, about 11 divisions of the 1st and 3rd Hungarian armies fought against the Red Army. The mass surrender of their soldiers and officers began only with the completion of the liberation of the territory of Hungary. For example, from 28 to 30 March alone, 45,000 Hungarians were taken prisoner in the areas bordering Austria. Hungary actually remained an ally of Germany until the Red Army completely captured its territory.

In liberated Budapest. February 1945

Three days after the capture of Budapest, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command assigned new tasks to the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts. The troops of Marshal Malinovsky were to strike in the general direction on Bratislava, Vienna, and

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3rd Ukrainian Front - no later than the 15th day of the operation, reach the Austrian-Hungarian border, defeating the enemy grouping north of Lake Balaton. In the future, the front was to assist the troops of Marshal Malinovsky and, together with them, capture Vienna.

However, the plan developed by the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command had to be amended, as the enemy launched a counteroffensive in the area of Lake Balaton. The defense of the Soviet troops in the area of this lake became another bright page in the history of the Great Patriotic War.

Attaching great importance to the counter-offensive in the area of Lake Balaton, the German command transferred there from the west the 6th SS Panzer Army, which was armed with a significant number of Panther, Tiger and King Tiger tanks, assault guns and anti-tank guns on self-propelled carriages. In total, more than 30 divisions operated in front of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, including 11 tank divisions, 3 battle groups and a motorized brigade. They numbered over 430,000 soldiers and officers, over 5,600 guns and mortars, about 900 tanks and assault guns, and 850 aircraft. By concentrating such forces, the German command hoped, by throwing back the 3rd Ukrainian Front across the Danube, to secure the industrial regions of Austria and Southern Germany, to keep Hungary as an ally, and to divert the attention of the Soviet command from the central direction.

The 3rd Ukrainian Front, having more than 400 thousand people, about 7 thousand guns and mortars, 400 tanks and self-propelled guns, built a defense on four lanes. Making the main bet on the fire destruction of the advancing troops, the Soviet command created quite high operational densities of anti-tank artillery (18 guns per 1 km of front), minefields (up to 270 anti-tank and 2500 anti-personnel mines per 1 km).

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The enemy offensive began on the night of March 6. The main blow was dealt to the troops of the 4th Guards and 26th Armies, who were defending between the lakes Velence and Balaton. Having concentrated a powerful armored fist (up to 60 tanks were deployed in some directions per 1 km of the breakthrough area), the enemy tried to dismember the Soviet troops and reach the Danube.

The defending troops met the onslaught of the German-Hungarian formations with powerful artillery fire and air strikes. On March 6, aviation of the 17th Air Army made 368 sorties, including 227 against enemy tank divisions. As soon as the direction of his main attack was determined, the commander of the front troops reinforced the defense zone of the 26th army with his reserve and units of the 4th Guards Army. At the cost of heavy losses, the Germans and Hungarians on the first day of the offensive managed to penetrate into the defense of this army up to 3-4 km. In the following days, the intensity of the fighting did not decrease.

Hot battles with the enemy were in the air. On March 9, a group of seven Yak-3s led by squadron commander Captain A.I. Koldunov entered the battle with two groups of German aircraft. They had 10 Focke-Wulfs and 8 Messerschmitts. Having shot down 5 enemy planes, the Soviet pilots prevented air strikes on the positions of the 135th Rifle Corps and returned to the airfield in full force.

For eight days the enemy rammed the defenses of the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, and on the ninth day he brought his last reserve into battle - the 6th Panzer Division. The attacks of the tank group, which included up to 300 tanks and assault guns, followed one after another for another two days. The soldiers of the 27th Army held back its onslaught and forced them to stop their attacks. During the 10 days of the offensive, the enemy strike force operating east of the lake. Balaton, was able to overcome the main and in some places the second defensive line, advancing

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going 20-30 km. South of the lake Balaton from 6 to 20 March, enemy troops penetrated the defenses of the 57th Army by only 6-8 km. Their attempts to break through the Drava River to the northeast were completely unsuccessful. Formations of the 1st Bulgarian and 3rd Yugoslav armies, together with the Soviet units, repelled the blow of the troops of Army Group E.

The repulse of the enemy counteroffensive in the area of Lake Balaton was the last major defensive operation of the Soviet troops. The armies of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, in cooperation with the Bulgarian and Yugoslav troops, thwarted the plan of the German leadership. In these battles, the qualitative superiority of the Soviet tank forces, armed with the world's best IS-2 and T-34 tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts of the Su-100 type, was demonstrated. During the counteroffensive, the enemy lost over 40,000 soldiers and officers, over 300 guns and mortars, about 500 tanks and assault guns, and over 200 aircraft. The losses of the Soviet troops amounted to 32899 people.

The fighting in the area of Lake Balaton was still in full swing when the commanders of the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts received a directive to go on the offensive. Taking into account the current situation, the direction of the main attack was changed: if earlier it was planned to deliver it north of the Danube, now the troops had to launch an offensive south of this river.

March 16, i.e. the next day after the completion of the defensive operation, the 3rd Ukrainian Front went on the offensive. Overcoming the strong resistance of the enemy, his troops advanced 3-7 km. In order to speed up the defeat of the enemy tank grouping between

lakes Velence and Balaton; Tolbukhin the 6th Guards Tank Army, withdrawing it from the 2nd Ukrainian Front. Aircraft of the 17th Air Army attacked

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enemy columns: on the roads, at its communication centers, fortifications and airfields. On the same days, allied aviation also inflicted a number of strikes on important enemy targets, in particular, putting out of action 70% of oil refineries in Komarno.

Developing the offensive, the troops under the command of Marshal Tolbukhin on March 22 took the city of Szekesfehervar with battle. However, they could not surround and destroy the 6th SS Panzer Army. At the cost of heavy losses, the enemy managed to withdraw most of its forces and means from the operational "bag" formed by the Soviet troops. And the 46th army of this front surrounded the 17,000-strong enemy grouping in the Tovarosh area and, together with the landing of the Danube military flotilla and the 23rd tank corps, on March 26 completed the liquidation of the enemy, repelling his strong counterattacks on the outer front environment. Building on the success achieved, the troops of the 46th Army and the right wing of the 3rd Ukrainian Front by March 26 broke through the enemy defenses between the Danube and Lake. Balaton, overcame the mountains Vertesh and Bakony and, having advanced to a depth of 80 km, created the conditions for an attack on Vienna.

So, hostilities on the territory of Hungary were coming to an end. The end of the war itself was drawing near. What did the participation of the Hungarian state in it give, fighting on the side of the Third Reich almost to the complete loss of its territory? What are the main results of the war for the Hungarian people? They can be briefly reduced to the following. The country again lost those territories that were transferred to it by the Axis powers, and lost 40% of its national wealth. Golko within the modern borders of Hungary has lost about 1 million people, including 160,000 killed at the front, 280,000 killed in captivity, about 100,000 civilians, 350,000 Jews and Gypsies exterminated in concentration camps. In addition, about 350,000 more Hungarians left the country before the Soviet offensive.

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STORM OF KONIGSBERG

As a result of successful operations carried out in the summer and autumn of 1944, the troops of the Red Army reached the borders of East Prussia on a wide front. At the first stage of the East Prussian offensive operation, the 3rd Belorussian Front, in cooperation with part of the forces of the 1st Baltic Front (43rd combined arms and 3rd air armies), from January 13 to 26, 1945, conducted the Instenburg Königsberg and Mlavsko-Elbing offensive operations and, building on success, by February 10 split Army Group North into three isolated groupings: Heilsberg, Königsberg and Zemland.

From mid-February, a new stage of offensive operations of the Soviet troops began in the framework of the East Prussian operation. The execution of the main tasks by the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command was entrusted to the troops of the 1st Baltic (General of the Army I.D. Chernyakhovsky) and the 3rd Belorussian (General of the Army I.Kh. Bagramyan) fronts.

After the death of I.D. Chernyakhovsky, on February 21, the post of commander of the 3rd Belorussian Front was taken by Marshal of the Soviet Union A.M. Vasilevsky. On February 24, the 1st Baltic Front was reorganized into the Zemlyanskaya Group of Forces and included in the 3rd Belorussian Front. The united 3rd Belorussian Front included the 2nd and 11th guards, 43rd, 39th, 5th, 50th, 31st, 28th, 3rd, 48th combined arms, 1st and 3rd air armies. General I.Kh. Bagramyan was appointed commander of the troops of the Zemland group of troops and at the same time

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namely, the deputy commander of the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front.

In the period from March 13 to March 29, Soviet troops, intended to eliminate the Heilsberg group, dismembered and defeated the enemy troops opposing them and occupied the Heilsberg fortified area, destroying more than 93 thousand and capturing 46.5 thousand soldiers and officers enemy. After that, a new task arose on the turn of the day - to defeat the Königsberg grouping of the enemy.

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Defensive lines on the approaches and inside Berlin

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The Königsberg fortress existed for about seven centuries, constantly improving its defensive system. On January 22 (11), 1758, it was taken by Russian troops without a fight. At that time, the Prussian population, sworn into Russian citizenship by Apraksin, did not resist the Russian troops.

In April 1945 the situation was different. Königsberg was defended by part of the forces of the German operational group Zemland and the garrison, which included 4 infantry divisions, several separate regiments and battalions of the Volksturm. In total, up to 130 thousand people, about 4 thousand guns and mortars, 108 tanks and assault guns, 170 aircraft.

The Königsberg defense system included:

The outer defensive bypass (partially overcome by the Soviet troops in the January battles) and three positions. The fortress was a complex of fortifications of various eras. The city was surrounded by 15 ancient stone forts in a tight ring.

The structure of the fort looked like this: a pentagon with an area of 7-10 hectares with three underground floors. The walls and upper ceilings are made of brick two meters thick, and on top there is another one-meter layer of concrete. All this is crowned with an earthen "cushion", densely overgrown with trees and shrubs. Each fort was surrounded by a high rampart, the concrete slopes of which descended into a moat filled with water, 15 to 30 meters wide. All the forts were prepared for all-round defense and, in addition to defensive structures, had solid barracks, an electric power plant, a hospital, ammunition and food depots, and a garrison of 250-300 people. All fort structures were connected by underground passages and posterns (a closed communication passage in the form of an underground corridor).

The forts were connected into a single fire system with artillery pieces, machine guns and flamethrowers located in the first position. Serfs yell

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The diyas were capable of firing 300-kilogram projectiles at a range of up to 30 kilometers. In the intervals between the forts, up to 609 pillboxes and bunkers were located. The second position, held by

the outskirts of Königsberg, included strong stone buildings adapted for defense, barricades, reinforced concrete firing points, minefields. It had a depth of up to 2 kilometers and consisted of three trenches. The first trench passed through the suburbs. By the beginning of March, anti-tank ditches were dug around the city, the total length of which exceeded 50 kilometers. Anti-tank defense was also created by tens of thousands of mines, land mines, multi-ton granite blocks, reinforced concrete gouges. Against the infantry was stretched in several rows

barbed wire. The third position (internal defensive bypass) was equipped at a distance of five kilometers

Fort "Der Wrangel" - one of the forts of the inner defensive bypass of Königsberg

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from the front edge of the second position around the historical city center on the slopes of the so-called Litovsky rampart. There were 9 old but powerful brick forts built about a hundred years ago on the site of the city walls. They formed a closed ring, surrounded on the outer side by a deep ditch with steep earthen edges. Bridges were thrown to the gates of the forts, in front of which, as a rule, thick-walled brick coponiers rose. And inside the circle formed by the fortifications of the Litovsky rampart, tightly clinging to each other, there were multi-storey buildings in the central part of the city, turned into strongholds. The streets, especially those that led into the city center, were barricaded. All houses - strongholds were interconnected by trenches and communication passages.

In the very center of the city, on the high right bank of the Pregel River, rose the Royal Castle - a powerful citadel that could accommodate a garrison of several thousand people.

The troops of the 39th (Lieutenant General I.I. Lyudnikov), the 43rd (Lieutenant General A.P. Beloborodov), the 50th (Lieutenant General F.P. Ozerov) and the 11th Guards (Lieutenant General K.N. Galitsky) armies.

The 43rd Army, consisting of the 54th, 90th and 13th rifle corps (nine rifle divisions), as well as the 153rd tank brigade, five self-propelled artillery regiments, the 3rd breakthrough artillery division as part of the 100 artillery brigades, two artillery cannon brigades, a heavy mortar brigade, two separate artillery battalions of special power, an army cannon artillery brigade, an army anti-tank artillery regiment, two guards mortar brigades and two guards mortar regiments (BM -2 | "Katyusha" and BM-31);

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50th Army consisting of the 81st, 124th and 69th Rifle Corps with reinforcements.

In total, the Soviet grouping included 187 thousand people, 5200 guns and mortars, 538 tanks and self-propelled guns. In addition, at the end of March, an additional three separate divisions of special power arrived from the Stavka reserve, each of which had six 305-mm howitzers, and the 1st Guards Naval Railway Artillery Brigade (five batteries, four 180-mm and one 130-mm howitzers). -mm gun). As a result, there were 12 152-mm cannons, 4 180-mm cannons, 94 203-mm howitzers, 12 210-mm cannons, 18 280-mm mortars and 18 305-mm howitzers from artillery of large and special power.

From the air, this grouping was provided by the 1st (Colonel General T.T. Khryukin) and 3rd (Colonel General N.F. Papivnin) air armies, as well as long-range bomber formations of the 18th Air Army (Chief Air Marshal A.E. Golovanov). In addition, the Air Force of the Baltic Fleet, the 5th Guards and the 5th Bomber Aviation Corps of the RVGK (2,400 aircraft) operated in the interests of these troops. The general leadership of such large aviation forces was carried out by the commander of the Red Army Air Force, Chief Marshal of Aviation A.A. Novikov.

The idea of the Soviet command provided for the mastery of Koenigsberg by "star storm" - simultaneous strikes from several directions. From the northwest, the 43rd and 50th armies were to strike, from the south - the 11th guards army. From the east, only an active blockade of the city was envisaged by part of the forces of the 50th Army (324th and 110th rifle divisions of the 69th rifle corps). The armies were to break through the enemy's outer defense belt and reach the city by the end of the first day of the offensive. Then, by the end of the third day of the operation, capture the city.

On the first day, the army corps had to break through the outer contour of the fortress to a depth of 4 km,

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put the suburbs and start fighting directly for the city. Over the next two days, the troops of the 43rd Army were to defeat the enemy in the northern part of the city and reach the Prengel River, where they would join up with the troops of the 11th Guards Army advancing from the south. The divisions of the first echelon of the corps received the immediate task to a depth of 2.5 km, the task of the day - up to 4-4.5 km.

In terms of realizing the plan of the Soviet command, a decisive massing of forces and means was envisaged in the directions of the main strikes. Thus, the 43rd Army was to break through the enemy defenses in a 5 km sector with the forces of six divisions. The 50th Army received the task of breaking through the defenses in a 4 km sector with the help of four rifle divisions. This means that during the assault on Koenigsberg, the rifle division in the breakthrough sector operated on a front of about 800m. Rifle regiments (consisting of two battalions) broke through the enemy defenses on a front of 300–400 m.

Determination of such narrow areas of breakthrough for the formations caused a huge concentration of forces and means. In the armies in the breakthrough areas, the densities were: 0.7-0.8 km per rifle division, 27 tanks and self-propelled guns per [km of the breakthrough area, the densities of artillery ranged from 150 to 260 and even more guns and mortars of caliber 76 mm and above on | km front.

The high densities of forces and means predetermined the peculiar operational formation and combat order of the troops. It was decided to have the operational formation of armies in one echelon with the allocation of a reserve. The corps built their battle formation in two echelons: two divisions in the first, one in the second. The introduction of the second echelons of corps into battle was supposed on the second or third day of the operation during the battles for the city. In order to build up forces and means during the breakthrough of the first position, the battle formation of rifle divisions and rifle regiments was built in two echelons.

The first echelon of each regiment (two-battalion composition) was to act as an assault

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th squad. The second echelon battalion was also trained as an assault detachment. Each assault detachment, except for the rifle battalion, included a platoon of a regimental battery (two 76-mm cannons), a howitzer and two cannon batteries of divisional artillery, a company of 82-mm mortars and a battery of 102-mm mortars, 4— 5 self-propelled artillery mounts SU-122, 2-3 T-34 tanks. Assault detachments from the regimental artillery groups were allocated one division each. In addition, the actions of the detachments were supported by the fire of one or two divisions of the Regimental Artillery Group. In some cases, the assault detachment was given 152-mm and 203-mm guns, as well as 160-mm mortars.

To solve individual combat missions or actions on independent directions, assault groups were created as part of assault detachments. The basis of each assault group was from a platoon to a company of infantry, one or two guns or mortars, the actions of the group often

were supported by a tank or a SU-122 self-propelled artillery mount, as well as artillery fire from a regimental artillery group.

The engineering troops of the front were widely involved in operations as part of assault detachments and groups. Each assault detachment included one sapper company, and each assault group included one sapper platoon. In addition, in each corps, a grouping of engineer forces (up to five engineer companies) was created, which was tasked with: conducting engineering reconnaissance, equipping the starting area, removing minefields, making passages in enemy minefields, escorting nie infantry and tanks in the offensive.

As elements of operational formation on the scale of the front, the following were created: a front-line group of long-range artillery consisting of five brigades to fight enemy artillery in the zones of operations of the 43rd and 50th armies; artillery blockade group

® Assaults of the Great Patriotic

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she of Königsberg (9234 guns, including more than half of 100-mm and above); a group of railway artillery of the Baltic Fleet as part of the 1st Guards Naval Railway Brigade.

Destruction artillery groups (up to five battalions each) of 152-mm and 305-mm guns were created in the corps.

Much attention was paid to engineering support for the assault on the fortress. The corps was attached to a large number of engineering units and divisions. Thus, the 13th Guards Rifle Corps, which was supposed to advance in the breakthrough sector of the 43rd Army, had 14 sapper companies, which averaged seven companies per 1 km of the breakthrough.

General I.Kh. Bagramyan later recalled:

"... Perhaps the most difficult mission this time fell to the lot of the head of the engineering troops, General V.V. Kosyrev. Indeed, in ensuring the overcoming of such fortifications that were created around the city and in the city itself, the engineer troops had to play no less important role than aviation and artillery. Considerable forces were allocated: ten engineering sappers, three assault engineer-sappers, two motorized engineering and one pontoon brigades. And this is not counting those full-time sapper units that were in the corps and divisions. A significant part of these forces had to be included in 26 assault detachments and 104 groups.

The engineering troops had to do a gigantic job both during the preparation of the assault and during it. In addition to conducting a thorough engineering reconnaissance of the enemy's defense, it was necessary to prepare a lot of roads, bridges and column tracks, build a base point for torpedo boats on the coast of the Zemlyandsky Peninsula, flyovers for launching armored boats delivered by rail to the Pregel River, choose the initial foothold for troops destined for

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storm the city, overcome hundreds of passages in mine and wire obstacles under enemy fire.

With the beginning of the assault, the engineering troops had to clear mines and restore the paths for the advancement of tanks, artillery and other types of military equipment, and then clear the streets of the city and build crossings across the Pregel River and numerous deep canals. And all this work was carefully planned and timely completed. An important role was played by

chemical troops, the combat use of which was planned by Major General M.F. Doronin with his department. Three chemical defense battalions, seven separate flamethrower battalions, a company of high-explosive flamethrowers and five separate companies of backpack flamethrowers were allocated to ensure the assault. Flamethrower units were distributed among assault squads and assault groups.

During the preparation of the offensive, exceptionally great attention was paid to artillery reconnaissance. By April 2, all the forts, about 900 pillboxes, 180 fortified buildings and 106 enemy observation posts were discovered and studied by artillery officers. Each battery commander had a perspective photo panorama of the reconnaissance and firing sector assigned to the subunit.

The artillery offensive consisted of four periods: a period of destruction (three days), artillery preparation for an attack, artillery support for an attack, and artillery escort of infantry and tanks in the depths of the enemy's defenses.

During the period of destruction for four days, large-caliber artillery of the fleet and corps demolition groups fired on the city, destroying pillboxes, solid buildings, and barricades. Two days before the beginning of the period of destruction, howitzer artillery of 122 and 152 mm caliber was to fire open all permanent structures (clear the camouflage with fire).

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and destroy the earth cover layer). Aviation during this period was inactive due to poor weather.

For the destruction of forts, reinforced concrete firing structures and concrete shelters, guns with a caliber from 203 to 305 mm were involved. As a rule, an artillery battalion was allocated to each fort, which fired for 5-6 hours a day for three days. Between 360 and 440 shells were spent on each fort. As a result, from 90 to 200 shells hit the pillboxes. Despite this, some of these fortifications were not destroyed by the beginning of the assault.

At 9 o'clock artillery preparation began in the zone [of the 1st Guards Army, and an hour later - in the zones of the 43rd and 50th armies. It was planned to last 180 minutes. Of these, artillery worked for two hours for destruction, 20 minutes were allotted for direct fire of guns, 35 minutes for suppression and destruction of enemy manpower and fire weapons. Fire training ended with a 5-minute powerful fire raid.

Support for the attack of infantry and tanks was carried out by a double fire shaft to a depth of 2 km.] main and 10 intermediate milestones were outlined. Accompanying the battle of infantry and tanks in depth was to be carried out by the method of successive concentration of fire on previously designated objects and targets.

To carry out the tasks of the artillery offensive, on March 28, artillery took up firing positions and began additional reconnaissance and planned sighting of the intended targets. However, immediately before the start of the assault on the fortress, the search for scouts and reconnaissance in force until April 5 were prohibited. Intelligence was carried out only by observation.

In order to completely open up the enemy defenses, and also to make sure that he occupies the first trench, on April 5 reconnaissance was carried out in combat with forces from a platoon to a company from each rifle division of the first

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echelon. In the course of reconnaissance in combat, some subunits broke into the first enemy trench, which was located behind the anti-tank ditch. This allowed the sappers to build 60-ton bridges across the moat during the night.

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12 assault

, detachments

: first echelons

| rifle regiments

| with tanks, self-propelled guns and artillery

|

, escorts

| 12 battalions, second echelons of rifle regiments, self-propelled guns, regimental art.

| groups. |

second echelons of rifle divisions, divisional art. groups

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Second echelons

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: art. groups.

Army artillery. groups

Operational formation of the 43rd Army and battle formations of formations and units

during the assault on Königsberg

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At the same time, in connection with the capture of the first enemy trench by the advanced units, the artillery preparation for the attack was reduced from three to two hours.

The assault on the fortress began on April 6 at 10 am with artillery preparation for the attack. Its effectiveness was so high that the enemy artillery, even 2 hours after the end of the artillery preparation for the attack, could not conduct aimed fire at the Soviet troops. Due to unfavorable weather conditions, aviation practically did not work that day.

At 12 o'clock, the infantry and tanks, following the double barrage, moved to storm the fortifications. The resistance of the garrisons of the forts was relatively weak. Assault detachments and groups infiltrated between the forts and pillboxes, surrounded and blocked them from all sides.

But in the depths of the defense, the enemy offered stubborn resistance. Violent counterattacks were made at the slightest advance of the attackers. By the end of the day, the 43rd, 50th, and 11th Guards Armies broke through the fortifications of the outer defenses of Königsberg, reached its outskirts, and cleared a total of 102 quarters of enemy troops. Formations of the 39th Army, having broken through the outer defensive line, reached the railway to Pillau and cut it west of Königsberg. The fascist German command to the west of the fortress brought the 5th Panzer Division, separate infantry and anti-tank units into battle. Meteorological conditions ruled out the participation of bomber aircraft and a significant part of attack aircraft in combat operations. Therefore, the air army of the front, having made only 274 sorties in the first two hours of the assault, was unable to prevent the advancement and commissioning of enemy reserves.

Directly in the offensive zone of the 43rd Army there were 4 forts: No. 5 "Charlottenburg", No. 5A, No. bi No. 7. Parts of this army were the first to break into the city. But

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the Nazis put up stubborn resistance to its troops, from time to time conducting counterattacks.

By the evening of April 6, the enemy's defensive position had been broken through. Some of the forts and pillboxes were destroyed, others were blocked. The garrisons of the forts "Kanitz" and "Lendorf" capitulated without waiting for the assault. Soviet troops reached the outskirts of the city (defensive position No. 2) and started night battles, which were especially cruel.

By the morning of April 7, the troops of all three armies captured seven forts of the first position and cleared more than a hundred quarters on the outskirts of the city from the enemy. On this day, the weather improved, and aviation began to operate with full effort. Only in the period from 13:30 to 14:30, 516 Il-4 long-range bombers from the 18th Air Army dropped 550 tons of bombs on the city. All the same, during that day 4,758 sorties were made on Königsberg and 1,658 tons of bombs were dropped.

The troops were slowly advancing deep into the city, part of the forces solving problems in the first position. The enemy resisted fiercely. During April 7 alone, they carried out 35 counterattacks, mainly against the troops of the 43rd and 39th armies. Despite this, by the end of the day, the Soviet troops managed to capture several important objects, including one of the most powerful forts - "King Friedrich Wilhelm III" (Fort No. 5), which resisted especially stubbornly. Subsequently, for the heroism shown during the storming of this fort, 15 soldiers and officers were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

On the morning of April 8, the assault resumed with renewed vigor. By the middle of the day, uniting in the Amalienau area, the troops of the 11th Guards and 43rd armies cut off the northwestern part of the city. After this, formations of the 11th Guards Army broke the enemy's resistance in the southern part of the city and started fighting in its center.

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A particularly important role was played by assault groups that had previously undergone special training. Groups of machine gunners infiltrated between houses, penetrated behind enemy lines, conducted reconnaissance, and blocked individual streets until the main forces of the assault detachment approached. The escort guns, acting in pairs, fired at direct fire, destroying weapons in buildings and destroying barricades in the streets. They moved in leaps: at a time when one gun fired at the enemy, the second made a move to new firing positions.

Tanks and self-propelled guns moved behind the infantry at a distance of 15-22m. As soon as the infantry met enemy resistance, they moved forward, fired at newly discovered targets or destroyed barricades.

At 15:00, formations of the 11th Guards Army broke into the square in front of the Royal Castle. Artillery opened fire on the castle with direct fire, and clouds of Soviet aviation appeared in the air above it. Planes of the 18th Air Army made a massive raid on the fortress. Under the cover of 232 fighters, they destroyed fortifications, artillery firing positions and destroyed enemy troops. The Pillau base, where warships and enemy transports were located, was also subjected to repeated massed raids by the fleet aviation and the 4th Air Army. In just the third day of the assault, Soviet aviation made 6,000 sorties and dropped 2,100 bombs of various calibers. Late in the evening, in the offensive zone of the 50th Army, the last fort of the outer defensive contour of Königsberg, Gneisenau, surrendered.

On this day, the advancing troops operated mainly as assault detachments and groups. All divisional artillery was attached to assault detachments. The number of escort guns was constantly growing. For example, if there were 188 of them in the 43rd Army on April 6, then by

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by the end of April 8 - 312. In addition, single rocket projectiles were widely used for direct fire in street battles. For this purpose, 2-3 assault groups of 12 people each were created in the guards mortar brigades. M-31 rocket projectiles were fired directly from the closure, which was installed opposite the object to be destroyed.

On this day, the Königsberg garrison, through the parliamentarians, was asked to lay down their arms, but the German command did not accept this offer, and the troops subordinate to them continued to resist. Moreover, an attempt was made by the forces of separate units of the Königsberg garrison to break through to the west in the zone of the 43rd Army, which was suppressed. Also, the enemy's attempt to unblock the city with a strike by the 5th Panzer Division from the Zemlandsky Peninsula was not crowned with success.

On April 9, at 09:30, Soviet troops again opened heavy artillery fire on the quarters and objects that the enemy still continued to hold. Air strikes were carried out on them from the air. Unable to withstand this pressure, separate groups of German troops in different parts of the city began to surrender. Soon this process became massive. At 21:00 in the concrete casemate of the bomb shelter, the act of unconditional surrender of the garrison was signed by the commandant of the fortress, General O. Lyash. The Soviet flag flew over Fort Derdon.

General I.Kh. Bagramyan:

"By the evening of April 9, the entire northwestern, western and southern parts of Königsberg were in our hands. The enemy continued to use his last strength to hold only the very center and eastern part of the city.

Finally, the commandant of Königsberg made the first reasonable decision in the last two days of fighting. He sent truce envoys to us with a message about the cessation of further resistance. At 6:30 p.m. General

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K.N. Galitsky reported to Marshal A.M. Vasilevsky about the arrival at the headquarters of the 11th Guards Rifle Division of representatives of the commandant Colonel Khevke and Lieutenant Colonel Kervin. A.M. Vasilevsky ordered to send our representatives with them to the headquarters of General O. Lash to accept the surrender. As parliamentarians, the chief of staff of the 11th Guards Rifle Division, Lieutenant Colonel P.G. Yanovsky, captains V.M. Shpitalnik and A.E. Fedorko. With danger to their lives, they made their way to the former Universitetskaya Square along the littered with rubble, lined with machinery and mined streets. At 9:30 p.m., General O. Lash was given an ultimatum by the Soviet command, and

he, after some hesitation, signed a written order to his troops to end resistance.

At dawn, the first columns of prisoners began to move from the center of the city. Returning to the command post of the front, I found there a group of fascist generals, led by the tall and thin commandant of the fallen Königsberg, Otto Lasch. Suppressed by the fall of an impregnable, in their opinion, fortress, so unexpected for them, they were expecting a meeting with A.M. with a gloomy look. Vasilevsky, who expressed a desire to interrogate the leaders of the fascist defense. When I entered the office of the commander of the front, Chief Marshal of Aviation A.A. Novikov, generals V.E. Makarov, A.P. Pokrovsky and others. Marshal of the Soviet Union A.M. Vasilevsky exchanged impressions with them about the course of the assault on Königsberg. I joined the conversation with pleasure and with admiration heard from the lips of the chief of staff of the front about the results of our victory.

During the Königsberg operation, about 42 thousand enemy soldiers and officers were destroyed, almost 92 thousand people were taken prisoner, including 1800 officers and 4 generals, led by the commandant of the fortress, General

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ralom O. Lashem. 2023 guns, 1652 mortars and 128 aircraft were captured.

In connection with the capture of Königsberg, Moscow saluted the soldiers of the 3rd Belorussian Front with 24 artillery volleys from 324 guns. For the assault on this fortress, about 200 Soviet soldiers were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Among them were the commander of the 43rd Army, General A.P. Beloborodov, commander [of the 1st Guards Army, General K.N. Galitsky, commander of the 1st Air Army, General T.T. Khryukin, commander of the 3rd Air Army General N.F. Papivnin, commander of the 36th rifle corps, General P.K. Koshevoy, commander of the 5th Guards Rifle Division, General G.B. Peters, commander of the 18th Guards Rifle Division, General G.I. Karizhsky, commander of the 91st Guards Rifle Division Colonel V.I. Kozhanov and many others.

ORDER

SUPREME COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

TO THE COMMANDER OF THE TROOPS

3rd BELARUSIAN FRONT TO MARSHAL OF THE SOVIET UNION VASILEVSKY

TO THE CHIEF OF THE FRONT STAFF

COLONEL GENERAL POKROVSKY

"The troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front, after stubborn street fighting, completed the defeat of the Königsberg group of German troops and today, April 9, stormed the fortress and the main city of East Prussia, Königsberg, a strategically important center of German defense on the Baltic Sea.

During the day of fighting, by 8 p.m., the troops of the front had captured over 27,000 German soldiers and officers, and also captured a large amount of weapons and various military equipment. Remains of the Königsberg garrison

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Led by the commandant of the fortress, General of Infantry Lyash, and his staff today at 9:30 p.m., they stopped resisting and laid down their arms..."

Moscow celebrated the feat of heroes with festive fireworks. 97 units and formations that directly stormed the main city of East Prussia were given the honorary name of Königsberg. On June 9, 1945, the Medal "For the Capture of Koenigsberg" was established by the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to reward all the direct participants in the assault. In total, more than 750 thousand people were awarded this medal (four times more than it was in the group of troops that stormed the city). In the battles for Koenigsberg, Soviet troops lost more than 60 thousand people killed, more than a hundred thousand were injured. Sam A.M. Vasilevsky was awarded the Order of Victory for the capture of Koenigsberg.

* * AND

Thus, the fall of the Königsberg fortress actually predetermined the successful outcome of the offensive operation of the Soviet troops in East Prussia, which became the first major operation in the military activities of Marshal of the Soviet Union A.M. Vasilevsky.

The Königsberg offensive operation of the Soviet troops was characterized by a simultaneous strike by three armies in converging directions and a resolute massing of forces and means on the main attack axes. A huge role in achieving the success of the assault belonged to the use of artillery of all calibers, aviation and engineering troops.

A feature of the use of artillery was the organization of the artillery blockade of Königsberg, as a result of which many important

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nye objects in the defense of the enemy. Characteristic of this operation was the massive use of artillery of high and special power (152 mm Br-2 guns and 305 mm Br-18 howitzers).

Aviation made a great contribution to the suppression of the enemy in the fortress. Since it was very difficult to hit point targets, the tactics of attack aircraft were based on the principle of long-term impact on the enemy. To do this, one wave of aircraft was constantly replaced by another wave, and air strikes were carried out only on reconnoitered areas and on target designations from the ground. To do this, from the moment of departure, the pilots constantly kept radio communications with the aircraft controllers and made several approaches to make sure that they were correctly reaching the given target. All important targets were numbered in advance, and during the battle the pilots only received short commands: "Work on target No. 245."

and PS\K \$3771 IE "

same

Groups of attack aircraft sent to escort infantry engaged in street fighting consisted of 4-6 Il-2 aircraft. Having received the task, the commander led the group on a combat course and built a "blunt wedge" in battle formation. 5-7 kilometers before approaching the front line, the group commander communicated by radio with the aircraft controller and clarified the combat mission and signals for designating the front line of his troops. After that, the attack aircraft made the first "idle" approach to the target, and the strike was delivered, as a rule, from the second approach.

The tactics of the ground forces were based on the actions of assault detachments and assault groups, which were formed on the basis of heterogeneous forces and means. Before the start of the offensive, one assault detachment was formed for each regiment of divisions of the first echelon and two assault groups for each regiment of the second echelon. The composition of the assault detachments and groups was indicated in the order in parts and did not change over the entire period of combat training. In all divisions, training fields were equipped according to the enemy defense scheme in the zones of upcoming operations, where personnel were trained. The assault on individual stone structures (buildings) was practiced in settlements and farms where there were such buildings.

In battle, the assault squad moved in the following order. Tanks moved ahead. The tanks were followed by a rifle company and two platoons of sappers who carried and set up assault bridges. Between the platoons there were 76-mm guns of regimental artillery, and on the flanks of the rifle company there were flamethrowers and 76-mm guns of divisional artillery. The first echelon was followed by 5 122-mm self-propelled guns. A little behind on the flanks - one 122-mm divisional artillery gun. Behind the self-propelled guns moved the second rifle company, built in one line. A platoon of submachine gunners and a platoon of Sape remained in reserve.

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ditch. Mortars and an artillery battalion were located in closed firing positions.

The assault group acted in the following order. A tank moved ahead. Behind him on the right and left were two rifle platoons with a platoon of sappers in their battle formations. On the flanks there were one 45-mm gun and flamethrowers, and between the rifle platoons there was a 76-mm gun of regimental artillery. The third platoon with a 76-mm regimental artillery gun moved behind one of the platoons of the first line in readiness to increase the group's efforts in a decisive direction.

Speaking about the assault on Königsberg, the question should be divided into two components. The first part deals with tactical issues: the courage and heroism of individual soldiers, the military art of the commanders of subunits, units, formations. This part does not raise any doubts, and a deep bow to all participants in the assault on the enemy stronghold.

The second part - the question of level strategy - is much more complicated. It is connected with the rationality of the assault on the Königsberg fortress a month before the end of the Great Patriotic War, at a time when the victory of the Red Army was already quite obvious, the Allies did not plan to capture East Prussia, and Königsberg itself was already blocked by the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front.

At the strategic level, this issue lay purely in the political and opportunistic plane. Stalin needed another resounding victory, and the capture of the Königsberg fortress (a stronghold of Prussian militarism) was supposed to be such a victory.

Among the commanders of the final period of the war, only those who were devoted to I.V. Steel-well, people. That is why the post of commander of the 3rd Belorussian Front after the death of I.D. Chernyakhovsky in February 1945 was appointed A.M. Vasilev

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Till then, since the beginning of the war, he had worked in the General Staff, and in 1942, in the position of Chief of the General Staff. During this time, he worked so well with I.V. Stalin, that in just three years he rose from a major general to a marshal of the Soviet Union. Also, one should not forget that A.M. Vasilevsky, like I.V. Stalin, before the revolution, graduated from a religious school, and Joseph Vissarionovich remembered this well.

Now about A.M. Vasilevsky. Having received at the final stage of the war under the command of the 3rd Belorussian Front, aimed against East Prussia, Alexander Mikhailovich decided to fully demonstrate his military leadership qualities.

After the loss of Königsberg, the Nazi command was still trying to hold the Zemlyandsky peninsula. K. On April 13, eight infantry and tank divisions, as well as several separate regiments and battalions of the Volkssturm, were defending here, which were part of the Zemland task force, which included about 65 thousand people, 1.2 thousand guns, 166 tanks and assault guns

From the appeal of the Soviet command to the command of the Zemland group:

"... You are well aware that the entire German army suffered a complete rout... The Russians near Berlin and Vienna. Allied troops - 300 km east of the Rhine. The Allies are already in Bremen,

Hanover, Braunschweig, approached Leipzig and Munich. Half of Germany is in the hands of Russian and allied troops. One of the strongest German fortresses Königsberg fell in three days. The commandant of the fortress, General of the Infantry Lash, accepted the terms of surrender offered by me and surrendered with most of the garrison. In total, 92,000 German soldiers, 1819 officers and 4 generals surrendered ...

German officers and soldiers who remained in Zemland! Now, after Königsberg - the last stronghold of German troops in East Prussia, your position

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completely hopeless. No one will send you help. 450 km separate you from the front line at Stetgin. Sea routes to the west are cut by Russian submarines. You are in the deep rear of the Russian troops. Your position is hopeless. Against you are the many times superior forces of the Red Army. The force is on our side, and your resistance does not make any sense. It will only lead to your death and to numerous casualties among the civilian population that has accumulated in the Pillau area ...

To avoid unnecessary bloodshed, I demand that you lay down your arms, stop resisting and surrender within 24 hours. All generals, officers and soldiers who cease resistance are guaranteed life, adequate food and return to their homeland after the war. All the wounded and sick will be immediately provided with medical assistance. I promise all who surrendered to be treated worthy of a soldier... If my demand to surrender is not met within 24 hours, you risk being destroyed. German officers and soldiers! If your command does not accept my ultimatum, act on your own. Save your life, surrender."

The term provided by A.M. Vasilevsky to the enemy, expired at midnight on April 2, Moscow time. "We waited one day and two nights," writes I.Kh. Bagramyan, that the fascists blocked on the peninsula would come to their senses. On the morning of April 13, A.M. Vasilevsky gave the order: "Attack and destroy the enemy."

To eliminate enemy troops on the peninsula, the command of the 3rd Belorussian Front allocated the 2nd Guards, 5th, 39th, 43rd and 11th Guards armies. More than 111 thousand soldiers and officers, 5.2 thousand guns and mortars, 451 rocket artillery installations, 324 tanks and self-propelled artillery installations were involved in the operation. Main blow

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in the direction of Fischhausen, the 5th and 39th armies were to inflict in order to cut the enemy troops into the northern and southern parts and subsequently destroy them by the joint efforts of all armies. To provide a strike force from the flanks, the 2nd Guards and 43rd Armies were preparing for an offensive along the northern and southern coasts of the Zemlandsky Peninsula, the 11th Guards Army was the second echelon. The Red Banner Baltic Fleet was given the task of securing the coastal flank of the 2nd Guards Army from possible enemy shelling and landings from the sea, assisting the offensive along the coast with naval and coastal artillery fire, and disrupting the evacuation of enemy troops and equipment by sea.

On the night before the offensive, the 1st and 3rd air armies launched a series of massed strikes against the combat formations of the enemy troops, defensive structures, ports and communication centers. On the morning of April 13, after an hour of artillery preparation, the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front, supported by aviation, went on the offensive. The enemy, relying on a system of field engineering structures, offered unusually stubborn resistance. Numerous counterattacks by his infantry were supported not only by field artillery fire, but also by artillery from surface ships and self-propelled landing barges.

Slowly but steadily the Soviet troops advanced westward. Despite the strong and continuous combat support of aviation, which made 6111 aircraft on the first day of the operation

sorties, the main strike force managed to advance only 3-5 km. Heavy fighting continued into the next day. Especially stubborn was the resistance of the enemy in front of the center and left wings of the front. However, fearing dismemberment, the Nazi command from April 14 began to gradually withdraw its units to Pillau. Vos

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taking advantage of this, the Soviet troops attacked his positions on the entire front. The 2nd Guards Army achieved the greatest success.

On April 15, its formations cleared the entire northwestern part of the Zemlandsky Peninsula from the enemy and rushed south along the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea. By the end of the day, under the onslaught of Soviet troops, the defenses that blocked the path to the Pillau Spit collapsed. On the night of April 17, with a double blow from the north and east, formations of the 39th and 43rd armies captured the city and port of Fischhausen.

The remnants of the enemy grouping (15-20 thousand people) withdrew to the northern part of the Pillau Spit, where they entrenched themselves on a pre-prepared defensive line. The 2nd Guards Army, weakened in previous battles, was unable to break through its defenses on the move and suspended the offensive.

The 1st and 3rd air armies conducted combat operations with great tension, making about 5,000 sorties daily. The forces of the fleet covered the coastal flank of the advancing troops, disrupted the evacuation of enemy personnel and military equipment by sea, sank several ships and transports, landing barges and submarines. The front commander decided to bring the 11th Guards Army into battle. Replacing the troops of the 2nd Guards Army west of Fischhausen on the night of April 18, the formations of the 11th Guards Army conducted reconnaissance in force on the very first day, and on the morning of April 20, after artillery preparation, attacked the enemy. For six days there were battles on the outskirts of Pillau, one of the strongholds of East Prussia. The wooded terrain of the spit, in combination with engineering structures, increased the stability of the enemy defense, and the small width of the land (2-5 km), which completely excluded maneuver, forced the attackers to carry out frontal attacks. Tol

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By the end of April 24, the 11th Guards Army had broken through the 6-kilometer zone of defensive positions covering the approaches to Pillau from the north.

On April 25, Soviet troops broke into its outskirts. By evening, a red flag was raised over the city. The last knot of enemy resistance in the southwestern part of the Zemlandsky Peninsula was eliminated.

After the capture of Pillau, only the narrow Frische-Nerung spit remained in the hands of the Nazis. The front commander entrusted the task of forcing the strait and liquidating these troops to the 11th Guards Army with the support of the forces of the Southwestern Marine Defense Region. On the night of April 26, advanced formations of the army, under the cover of artillery and aviation fire, crossed the strait. At the same time, the rifle regiment of the 83rd Guards Rifle Division of the 11th Guards Army, the combined regiment of the 43rd Army, together with the regiment of the 260th Marine Brigade, were landed by the fleet on the western and eastern coasts of the Frische-Nerung Spit. Together they captured the northern section of the spit. The formations of the army entrenched themselves at the reached line. In the center and in the southern part of the Frische-Nerung spit, as well as at the mouth of the Vistula River, the remnants of the once strong East Prussian grouping offered stubborn resistance. On May 9, more than 22,000 enemy soldiers and officers laid down their arms.

The defeat of the enemy on the Zemlandsky Peninsula was the finale of the entire East Prussian operation, as a result of which 42 enemy divisions.

A little more than a hundred days and the same number of nights lasted the East Prussian strategic offensive operation of the Soviet Armed Forces, carried out from January 13 to April 26, 1945 by the troops of the 3rd Belorussian (commander - General of the Army I. D. Chernyakhovsky, from February 20 - Marshal of the Soviet Union A.V. Vasilevsky, member of the Military Council

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that - Lieutenant General V.E. Makarov, chief of staff, Colonel-General A.N. Pokrovsky) and the 2nd Belorussian (commander - Marshal of the Soviet Union K.K. Rokossovsky, member of the Military Council - Lieutenant General N.E. Subbotin, Chief of Staff Lieutenant General (from February 17 - Colonel General) A.N. Bogolyubov) fronts, as well as part of the forces of the 1st Baltic Front (commander - General of the Army I.Kh. Bagramyan, member of the Military Council - Lieutenant General M.V. Rudakov, chief of staff Colonel General V.V. Kurasov). The operation was assisted by ships of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet (commander — Vice Admiral N.K. Smirnov, chief of staff — Rear Admiral A.N. Popov). The actions of the land and sea forces were supported by long-range aviation - the 18th Air Army (commander - Chief Marshal of Aviation A.E. Golovanov, chief of staff - Lieutenant General of Aviation N.V. Per MINOV).

It was one of the largest operations of the Great Patriotic War, as a result of which 32 enemy divisions, numbering up to 320 thousand soldiers and officers, were surrounded. During the fighting, the Red Army completely destroyed more than 25 enemy divisions, 12 divisions lost from 50 to 75%. The Wehrmacht lost 120,000 killed and missing, and 194,000 captured. The fighting took place in a strip of 455 km to a depth of more than 200 km. As part of this strategic offensive operation, the Instenburg-Königsber, Miav-Elbit, Königsberg and Zemland operations were successfully carried out. On February 10, the main forces of the 2nd Belorussian Front began the East Pomeranian operation.

THE STORM OF VIENNA

The defeat of the Nazi troops in Western Hungary created favorable conditions for the offensive of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, located north of the Danube.

The 40th Army, acting jointly with the 4th Rumanian Army, accelerated the offensive in the mountains of Slovakia and by April 4 captured the large settlement of Gandlova. On April 25, the troops of the 53rd and 7th Guards Armies, as well as the 1st Romanian Army, went on the offensive. Having broken the resistance of the enemy, on April 4 they captured a large settlement in Czechoslovakia - the city of Bratislava. By that time, the troops of the 46th Army had already captured the large industrial center of Hungary, the city of Győr. In the following days, the armies developed an offensive south of the Danube and reached the approaches to the capital of Austria, the city of Vienna.

The remnants of the broken formations of the enemy retreated to Vienna, which were quickly reorganized into combat units. Reserves were sent there. The German command sought to keep Vienna at all costs in order to prevent the advance of Soviet troops into the southern regions of Germany. In total, the enemy managed to concentrate up to eight calculated divisions in the Vienna area. The main forces of these troops covered the approaches to the city from the south, where there were a large number of anti-tank weapons, engineering barriers and other artificial and natural obstacles. Barricades were erected on the streets of the city. It was adapted to fight Soviet tanks.

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anti-aircraft artillery and numerous tank ambushes were arranged in advance.

The Soviet command decided to throw the 4th Guards Army and the 1st Guards Mechanized Corps of the 3rd Ukrainian Front against Vienna from the south, and the 6th Guards Tank Army and the 39th Guards Rifle Corps from the southwest. Actions of ground forces with

air was supposed to be supported by front-line aviation and part of the aviation of the Supreme High Command. Also, combat boats and other vessels of the Danube River Flotilla were sent there. The rest of the troops were to continue the offensive into the eastern regions of Austria. Thus, according to the general situation on the Soviet-German front and the balance of forces and means, the fate of the German troops stationed in Vienna was practically a foregone conclusion. At the same time, the commander of the Vienna garrison stubbornly continued to reject offers of voluntary surrender.

There was also no unanimous opinion at the headquarters of the 3rd Ukrainian Front regarding the need to storm Vienna. A number of generals and officers believed that Vienna was a historical monument of universal significance, and in connection with the imminent end of the war, it was enough to confine ourselves to establishing a complete blockade, without destruction by artillery fire and air strikes. But Moscow demanded the most decisive action.

On April 5, Soviet troops launched an attack on Vienna without an operational pause. On the southern outskirts of the city, they met stubborn resistance from the enemy and did not achieve success on the first day.

Southwest of Vienna, the defense of the German troops turned out to be less strong. The units of the 38th Guards Rifle Corps advancing there advanced 16-18 km during the day of the battle and practically reached the outskirts of the city. The front commander decided to immediately use the success achieved. During the night there regroup

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the 6th Guards Tank Army was feasted, which also received the task of bypassing Vienna from the west and northwest.

On April 6, formations of the 4th Guards Army intensified the pressure on the enemy and broke into the southern outskirts of the city. Street fighting began, which immediately acquired a very fierce character. The enemy, having prepared in advance for defense almost all structures that were important in tactical terms, stubbornly defended each house, and being unable to hold out, secretly went to another, also prepared for defense.

Under these conditions, the coordinated actions of rifle subunits, tank crews, gun crews and sappers, who formed the basis of assault detachments and assault groups, were of particular importance. Every house, let alone every quarter, had to be taken by storm. Artillerymen were forced to drag guns on their hands to the second floors of houses, into the breaches in the walls and fire from there with direct fire. Often there was a need to fire from the guns along an inclined trajectory, for which many of the calculated EVs were not ready. The tankers were met by the fire of enemy tank destroyers armed with faustpatrons, which unexpectedly appeared on their way, firing from the flank or even from the rear. The infantrymen had to advance through minefields, dismantling barricades, overcoming rubble and areas covered with barbed wire.

On April 7, formations of the 6th Guards Tank Army bypassed Vienna from the west and northwest, and then they rushed to the center of the city, sweeping away numerous firing points and pockets of enemy resistance on their way. On April 8, advanced tank units, accompanied by infantry, reached the city center, where they joined forces with the troops of the 4th Guards Army. The Vienna grouping of the enemy was dismembered and squeezed from three sides.

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Fighting in Vienna

The German command realized that the further defense of Vienna was doomed to failure, and decided to carry out a breakthrough of the remaining troops from the city. Only one bridge across the Danube remained in the hands of the enemy, which could be used for a retreat in a northwestern direction. The German command sought to preserve and hold this bridge at all costs, especially since the formations of the 46th Army were late in reaching Vienna from the northeast.

Under these conditions, the Soviet command decided to entrust the capture of the bridge to the boats of the Danube military flotilla. Suddenly appearing on the Danube, supported by air strikes and artillery fire, the boats were able to approach the bridge and land troops with forces up to a reinforced battalion. The paratroopers immediately launched an attack on the bridge, killed its guards and quickly took possession of the object. The only way for the retreat of the defenders of Vienna was cut off.

Street fighting continued. The remnants of the German garrison fought with desperate tenacity. The battle for the city has lost its clear outline. Often, in previously captured buildings or quarters, the battle suddenly flared up with renewed vigor. I had to repeatedly and several times

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comb through the same objects over and over again, throw grenades into basements. Only by the end of April 13, the fighting in Vienna began to subside, and the Soviet troops managed to establish control over the city.

During the assault on Vienna, the tactics of fighting for large cities received further development. Improving the experience of fighting acquired in Budapest, the Soviet troops in the battles for Vienna widely used assault detachments and groups, the main core of which was rifle subunits. The attack of the assault groups was accompanied by the fire of guns allocated for direct fire. The self-propelled artillery mounts that supported the assault groups operated in close contact with the infantry and artillery. The sappers, who were in the assault groups, made passages in barricades, stone walls, and also equipped passages through canals and anti-tank ditches. The coordinated actions of the troops ensured the defeat of the enemy and the capture of Vienna in nine days, i.e. in a shorter time than it was in other operations of the Great Patriotic War.

On one of the Viennese streets

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Medal "For the Capture of Vienna"

The fall of Vienna became the most important component of the Vienna offensive operation of the Soviet troops, the most important result of which was the defeat of the German Army Group South. According to Soviet data, during this operation, Soviet troops captured 130,000 enemy soldiers and officers, captured and destroyed 1,300 tanks and assault guns, and more than 2,250 field guns. Nazi Germany lost Hungarian oil and the industrial regions of Austria, which further worsened its situation.

The losses of Soviet troops during the Vienna operation were not reported for a long time. Only after the publication in 1993 of the work "Secret Classification Removed" did the casualties of the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front become known, which amounted to killed, wounded and missing almost 33 thousand people. The 2nd Ukrainian Front during this operation lost almost 6 thousand people. Doo

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the Nai military flotilla suffered no casualties during the entire operation.

Domestic sources are silent about the losses of the parties directly during the storming of Vienna. It can be assumed that they were far from in favor of the Soviet troops. But later, taking into account the capture of a large number of enemy soldiers and officers, the Soviet command decided that the losses incurred were fully justified. The surviving Soviet officers and soldiers were generously awarded orders, and on May 9, 1945, a special medal "For the Capture of Vienna" was established. In total, more than 270 thousand people were awarded this medal.

STORM OF BERLIN

Russian troops stormed Berlin and took the city several times. During the Seven Years' War on September 28, 1760, the corps of Lieutenant General Zakhar Grigorievich Chernyshov (1722-1784) captured Berlin. 4,000 Prussians were taken prisoner. But the Russian troops, having stayed in Berlin for four days and taking an indemnity, left this city when Frederick's troops approached. Half a century later, on February 27, 1813, during the Foreign Campaign of the Russian troops, Infantry General Pyotr Khristoforovich Wittgenstein (1765-1843) captured Berlin.

By the beginning of 1945, more than a thousand kilometers separated the Soviet-German front and the line occupied by the Anglo-American troops. And Berlin was right in the middle. However, a month later, the situation changed dramatically. In the course of a rapid offensive, the Red Army invaded Germany and by the end of January reached the nearest approaches to Berlin, to which it had only 60 km to overcome.

The Anglo-American troops were able to launch the offensive only on February 8, when they recovered from a sudden and powerful German counterattack in the Ardennes. In early April, the Western Allies, having surrounded the enemy's Ruhr grouping, were located at a distance of 300 km from the capital of Germany.
km.

It is quite understandable that, for political reasons, both the Red Army and the Anglo-American troops sought to capture Berlin first. There was no military necessity for such a contest. home at

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The rite had a completely different background, although the boundaries of the German occupation zones had already been agreed upon by the heads of governments of the USSR, the USA and Great Britain at the Crimean Conference. According to its decisions, the western border of the Soviet zone of occupation was to be 150 km west of Berlin, which was also to be divided among the allies.

The idea to forestall the Red Army in capturing the German capital belonged to British Prime Minister W. Churchill. He expressed his views on this matter as early as the autumn of 1944 and, despite the changed situation, continued to defend them in the spring of 1945. | April Churchill persistently persuaded US President Roosevelt: "If Berlin is within our reach, we must undoubtedly take it. It seems reasonable from a military point of view as well."

The Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces in Western Europe, General D. Eisenhower, had every reason to believe that "from a military point of view, it would be wrong at this stage of the development of the operation to make Berlin the main object of the offensive, especially in view of the fact that it is located 35 miles from the line location of the Russians.

As early as March 28, D. Eisenhower sent a personal message to Stalin, in which he outlined a plan for his further actions. He hoped at the end of April, and perhaps earlier, to defeat the enemy encircled in the Ruhr and continue the offensive with the aim of cutting all his forces by joining with the Soviet troops. The main blow was supposed to be delivered in the direction of Erfurt, Leipzig, Dresden, where a meeting with the Red Army was planned. D. Eisenhower's message did not say a word about Berlin, although it was reported at the Crimean Conference that it was here that the Anglo-American troops would advance.

The Soviet command these days was completing the planning of the Berlin offensive operation.

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At a meeting of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command on April 1, in the presence of the commanders of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts, its plan was discussed. Powerful strikes of the 1st and 2nd Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts were planned to break through the enemy defenses on the Oder and Neisse rivers,

encircle and destroy the main forces of the Berlin grouping and, having reached the Elbe, link up with the allies advancing from the west.

Having approved the plan, I.V. Stalin demanded that the operation be prepared as soon as possible. He ordered to start it no later than April 16, and complete it in 12 days.

It was on the same day, after the meeting, that I.V. Stalin replied to D. Eisenhower's message of 28 March. He reported that this plan completely coincided with the plans of the Red Army command. At the same time, I.V. Stalin assured the ally that Berlin had allegedly already lost its former strategic importance, and therefore, to capture it, the Soviet command would allocate only secondary forces, and would deliver the main blow in another direction in order to link up with the Anglo-American troops. He further indicated that the offensive of the main forces would begin approximately in the second half of May. "However," he wrote cautiously, "this plan may be subject to change depending on changes in the situation."

To some extent, the last addition should have justified two inaccuracies deliberately made by the Soviet leader: firstly, the main forces of the Soviet troops were allocated for the attack on Berlin, and not the secondary ones; secondly, according to the just scheduled date, it should have started a whole month earlier.

The German command sought to contain the advance of the Red Army at any cost in the hope of gaining time to conclude a separate peace with the Western powers. Such a policy, designed to

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the stake of the anti-Hitler coalition, after the Crimean conference of the heads of governments of the three great powers, became absolutely unrealistic. In a published communiqué on the results of this conference, Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill stated: "Nazi Germany is doomed. The German people, trying to continue their hopeless resistance, only makes the price of their defeat harder for themselves.

However, A. Hitler was not worried about the fate of the German people, but about the preservation of the fascist regime. All his thoughts about a separate peace were directed to the West. On the Eastern Front, he demanded from the Wehrmacht, on the contrary, to increase resistance. The special instructions of the National Socialist Party of April 3 said: "Our eyes must be turned only to the East, regardless of what happens in the West. Holding the Eastern Front is a prerequisite for a turning point in the course of the war!

When organizing defense on the Soviet-German front, the German command concentrated its main forces on the Berlin direction. Hasty defensive construction here began in January 1945, when the Soviet troops were just tearing up the defenses on the Vistula. Its intensity increased due to the involvement of the local population, foreign workers and even prisoners of war, although the use of the latter at military facilities was strictly prohibited by international laws.

The basis of the enemy's defense in the Berlin direction was the line along the Oder and the Neisse. The Germans created the strongest lines and in great depth against the 1st Belorussian Front, whose troops came closest to Berlin. Behind the Oder-Neissen border, the Germans equipped the Berlin defensive area, which consisted of three ring contours around the capital.

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The Berlin direction was defended by the troops of the Arzai groups "Vistula" and "Center" under the command of Generals G. Heinrici and F. Scherner. On April 5, Hitler conferred on the latter the rank of General Field Marshal. Troops concentrated in this area from the Baltic to the Carpathians, numbered about | | million personnel, [1.5 thousand tanks and assault guns, 10.4 thousand guns and

mortars. They were supported by the main forces of the Luftwaffe in the amount of 3.3 thousand combat aircraft, including 120 Me-262 jet fighters that had just appeared.

The Soviet troops faced a hard struggle, especially the 1st Belorussian Front. Against the Kyustrinsky bridgehead on the river. Oder, captured by the troops of this front, General Heinrici concentrated 14 divisions in the 44 km section. On average, there were 60 German guns and mortars, 17 tanks and assault guns per kilometer. The most powerful center of resistance on the way to Berlin was equipped by the Germans on the Seelow Heights. Their steep slopes cut by ravines, which towered over the wide Oderaw valley 10-12 km from the Kyustra bridgehead, tanks could only overcome by roads. The front was to break through the enemy defenses prepared and occupied in advance by the troops with a total depth of about 100 km. At the same time, the 2nd Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts were opposed by much smaller forces, the defense of which had a depth of no more than 40 km.

The offensive of the Soviet troops was complicated by spring floods and mudslides. First of all, this concerned the 2nd Belorussian Front, which was supposed to start breaking through the defense by forcing the Oder. The river here had two branches, the Ost-Oder and the West-Oder, separated by a two-kilometer floodplain. The flood-filled interfluvies allowed movement only along dams. For the 1st Ukrainian front, the value of the Oder as a water

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hail was reduced by the presence of the Kyustrinsky bridgehead. However, on the short way to Berlin, his troops had to advance through a densely populated area with many stone buildings. In the zone of upcoming operations of the 1st Ukrainian Front, the main natural barriers were the Neisse and Spree rivers, not to mention solid forests.

The defeat of a powerful enemy grouping in the Berlin direction in a short time required great efforts. In addition to the troops of the three fronts, parts of the forces of the 18th Air Army of the Long-Range Aviation, the country's air defense forces, the Baltic Fleet and the Dnieper military flotilla were involved in the Berlin operation. In total, the strike force of the Soviet troops included 2.5 million personnel, 41.6 thousand guns and mortars, 6250 tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts, 7.5 thousand combat aircraft. Never before in the entire war has such a large number of forces and means been concentrated for an offensive in such a narrow zone, the total width of which was only 385 km.

As a result of a decisive concentration of forces and means, the Soviet command in the Berlin direction achieved significant superiority over the enemy. They outnumbered the enemy troops in personnel two and a half times, in terms of the number of artillery and tanks - four, and aircraft - more than twice.

The main role in the upcoming operation was assigned to the 1st Belorussian Front. His troops were commanded by Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov, who at the same time was Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the USSR I.V. Stalin. Advancing along the shortest path to the capital of the Reich, the troops of the front dealt three blows. In the direction of the main blow, which G.K. Zhukov planned from the Kyustrinsky bridgehead, four combined arms and

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two tank armies. They were supposed to take Berlin on the sixth day of the operation. To the north and south of the bridgehead, two combined-arms armies were attacked. Cutting off the enemy from Berlin, they were supposed to reach the Elbe on the eleventh day of the operation to connect with allies.

With the troops of Marshal G.K. Zhukov, the 1st Ukrainian and 2nd Belorussian Fronts, led by Marshals I.S. Konev and K.K. Rokossovsky. The 2nd Belorussian Front was to cut off the enemy from Berlin in Western Pomerania and destroy him with a strike by three armies from the area south of Stettin. Troops I.S. Konev was to deliver two blows: the main one, with the forces of three combined arms and two tank armies south of Berlin, and the auxiliary one, with two armies on Dresden. At the same time, just in case, the Stavka ordered I.S. Konev provided for the turn of the tank armies to the north, in order, if necessary, to help the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front in capturing Berlin.

This decision suited I.S. Konev. "Of course, this was my passionate desire," he wrote after the war about the attack on Berlin. "I'm not afraid to admit it even now."

However, the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front G.K. Zhukov did not want to share the glory in mastering the capital of Germany with a neighbor. Returning from Moscow, he changed the task of the tank armies, which, according to the directive of the Headquarters of April 2, which had just been received, were supposed to bypass Berlin from the north. Zhukov ordered the 1st Guards Tank Army to advance south of the city, in order to reach it on the second day, and then on the western outskirts to join up with the 2nd Guards Tank Army, which was delivering the main blow north of the capital. From a military point of view, the change in the task of the tank army was quite justified. She could quickly reach the southern outskirts of the combined arms armies

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Well, Berlin and deprive the enemy garrison of the opportunity to receive assistance from the south. From a political point of view, G.K. Zhukov sought to prevent the tank armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front from reaching the city and getting involved in the battles for Berlin.

I.V. Stalin, who was well aware of the current intrigue and wishing to support his favorite, approved the new decision of the commander. "Act as you see fit, you know better where you are," he said to G.K. Zhukov, when he presented his arguments.

The Headquarters set tasks for the fronts on April 2-6. There was very little time left before the start of the offensive, and a huge amount of work lay ahead. The main difficulty was the creation of shock groups. The fact is that the main forces of the fronts were away from the planned strikes. From East Prussia, two armies arrived in the 1st Ukrainian Front, which, following in railway echelons, had not yet arrived. K.K. found himself in especially difficult conditions. Rokossovsky: The 2nd Belorussian Front was to regroup troops from the areas of Danzig and Gdynia at a distance of 300 km and, having replaced the armies of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front, take up a starting position for an offensive in the lower reaches of the Oder. By April 16, the 2nd Belorussian Front could not keep up with entering new areas. Zhukov personally reported this to Stalin. "Well then," the Supreme Commander replied, "we will have to start the operation without waiting for the actions of the Rokossovsky front. If he's a few days late, no problem."

The 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts were ordered to go on the offensive on April 16, and the 2nd Belorussian - on April 20, 1945. And in general, the troops completed the preparation of the offensive by the appointed time.

At the same time, it should be noted that the 28th and 31st armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front were still on the way. Gakzhe did not have time to fully concentrate in new

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areas and some parts of two other fronts. All late formations and units had to be allocated to the second echelon and the reserve of fronts, and the operation began without waiting for them.
approach.

The tight deadlines for preparing the offensive were also reflected in other issues: reconnaissance of the opposing enemy, comprehensive support for the offensive, and, first of all, on

logistic support of the troops. During their previous offensive, which had been carried out almost continuously for more than two months, most of the military material reserves were used up. It was very difficult to replenish them: the depots of the fronts and armies fell behind, rear communications stretched out, traffic along the partially destroyed railways and highways was restored very slowly.

Front commanders and staffs did everything possible to eliminate the shortcomings in the shortest possible time. In mid-April, the necessary material reserves were created, although the upcoming offensive from the Elbe River was provided with ammunition only taking into account the planned supplies.

The troops had only to receive them in a timely manner and distribute them among formations and units. To facilitate the delivery, the front and army bases were concentrated directly at the Oder, which did not require their relocation until the end of the operation. Before the offensive, all front-line hospitals were emptied of patients who could not be treated in the front-line rear, and army hospitals were prepared to move and quickly receive the wounded.

Painstaking work was carried out among the personnel. All soldiers, from the marshal to the soldier inclusive, well understood that the war was coming to an end. The desire of everyone to stay alive until the long-awaited Victory is quite understandable. It was not easy to move such troops on the offensive. It was also of great importance that the troops, who had suffered heavy losses in previous

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battles, began to receive replenishment mainly due to those called up from the Baltic states, the western regions of Ukraine and Belarus, from Moldova, who had just been liberated from the German occupation. For a long time (more than three years) they were under fascist occupation, were poorly trained in military affairs, and, to top it off, had a poor command of Russian. Moreover, among this category of the population there were many those whose families suffered from the Soviet regime in 1940, as well as people who served and worked for the Germans. All this had a negative impact on the morale and quality of combat training of the TROOPS.

Special work was organized by order of the higher command to quickly put the arrived replenishment into operation. The commanders of divisions and heads of political departments personally met the newly arrived soldiers. Rallies were immediately held, at which veterans congratulated the newcomers on joining the ranks of the front-line soldiers, and urged them to multiply the military traditions of the unit. Weapons were handed over in a solemn atmosphere. The morale of all personnel was supported by letters from relatives and countrymen, who urged soldiers and officers to quickly defeat the enemy and return home alive.

Of great importance for the preparation and conduct of the operation was the fact that the hostilities were conducted on German territory, where it was necessary to find a clear line between the civilian population and the enemy, who had recently occupied Soviet soil, creating unheard-of atrocities on it. It was important to direct the completely natural and just anger of the Soviet soldiers towards the invaders to carry out combat missions, while at the same time preventing outrages against local residents.

It was not easy to organize and carry out appropriate educational work. In the midst of preparations for the attack on Berlin, the newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda | April 1 published an article by a popular Soviet writer

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for I. Ehrenburg. In it, he called for merciless revenge on all Germans. A few days later, Pravda pointed out the fallacy of the writer's views. However, in the minds of Soviet soldiers, the desire to take revenge on the Germans prevailed, and it was very difficult to quickly overcome it. in memory and

Before the eyes of many, there were thousands of burnt cities and villages, the ruined lives of relatives and friends, dead comrades in arms, their own wounds inflicted by the enemy still hurt.

As always, it was decided to focus on the communists. But the heavy losses suffered in previous battles led to the disintegration of many party organizations. All possible measures were taken to restore them. Joining the party was practiced not only by one person, but also in groups, a facilitated admission process. As a result, in just one month, from March 15 to April 15, the party organizations of the three fronts accepted more than 17,000 soldiers and officers into their ranks. Of course, these people, having gone through additional communist agitation, had to show their comrades a personal example in battle.

Greater attention was paid to Soviet paraphernalia. So, in the armies of the 1st Belorussian Front, special State flags of the USSR were prepared, 1.5 by 3 meters in size. Each army advancing on Berlin made one such flag, it was intended for arming on the defeated building of the parliament of the Third Reich - the Reichstag. But the army commanders were also quick to take the initiative. It is known that in the 3rd shock army they decided to prepare nine banners, according to the number of rifle divisions included in it. In turn, corps, divisions, regiments and even subunits had their own red flags. The best soldiers were instructed to install them on an object captured from the enemy, which became a tradition during the war. An order was promised for the installation of the flag, which was a good moral incentive.

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While the Soviet troops were completing preparations for the Berlin operation, the Western allies were rapidly moving east. 11| April, the armored divisions of the 9th US Army, General W. Simpson, began to reach the Elbe. A little more than 100 km remained to the capital of Germany. Having broken away from the main forces, the divisions approaching the river experienced a shortage of fuel. The general assured that if supplies were brought to him within two days, he would be in Berlin in 24 hours, ahead of the Russians.

The initiative of the commander of the 9th Army was reported to General D. Eisenhower, but the commander-in-chief rejected the proposal. On April 15, he wrote to Washington: "Although it is true that we have captured a small bridgehead across the Elbe, it should be remembered that only advanced units have reached this river, while the main forces are still far behind."

Realistically assessing the situation, D. Eisenhower, as commander-in-chief, was aware that he did not yet have the necessary forces to capture Berlin. His reports to the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of England were clearly based on mathematical calculations and were full of sound conclusions. Nevertheless, W. Churchill resigned himself to this only after the Red Army broke through the German defenses in the Berlin direction.

Before the start of the general offensive, the 1st Belorussian Front conducted reconnaissance in force. The battalions allocated for this purpose from the divisions of the first echelon, reinforced with tank companies and batteries of self-propelled artillery mounts (ACS), with the support of artillery and aviation, attacked enemy positions from the Ugra on April 14 from the Kyustrinsky bridgehead. Over the next two days they advanced ekm. As a result of the actions of these battalions, it was established that the enemy decided stubbornly not to defend the first position, and concentrated all his main forces on the second and third positions. As a result, plan well

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the artillery preparation of the Soviet troops became ineffective, as it had to fall on an almost empty place.

But the advancing battalions also quickly lost their strike force. Therefore, at 3 pm on April 14, after a 15-minute fire raid along the main defense line, the rifle regiments of the first echelon divisions were brought into battle. In particular, in the zone of the 5th shock army, 8 rifle regiments were thrown into battle, reinforced by 106 tanks and self-propelled guns and supported by all artillery

army. By the middle of April 15, these regiments had captured the first position, and in some directions wedged into the second.

The advanced units of the 8th Guards Army of General V.I. achieved the greatest success. Chuikov. The German 20th motorized division could not resist their onslaught. Enraged by the news received about this, Hitler ordered an investigation. Without waiting for its results, he ordered that all personnel of the offending division be deprived of orders and other insignia until the soldiers and officers deserve them again. However, something else is important: the German command took reconnaissance in battle for the offensive of the main forces and believed that it was reflected. But that was a delusion and an incorrect assessment of the situation.

April 16, two hours before dawn, the troops of Marshal G.K. Zhukov launched an offensive with the main forces of the front. After a short but powerful artillery preparation, the infantry and tanks moved to the enemy defenses. With the beginning of the attack, 143 anti-aircraft searchlights were turned on in the breakthrough areas. On each kilometer of the breakthrough section, about 300 guns and mortars fired on average, more than 40 tanks attacked with direct infantry support.

The use of searchlights to blind the enemy by subsequent historians is credited to G.K. Zhukov. But few of them thought that

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these searchlights, fixed permanently, within a few minutes began to shine in the back of the advancing troops, and the attackers themselves quickly created a kind of screen from the raised dust. Against the background of this screen, the silhouettes of tanks, self-propelled guns and people were seen very clearly, and it was not difficult for enemy shooters and gunners to conduct aimed fire.

True, some argue that the Germans mistook the dazzling light of searchlights for a new weapon. The enemy was so stunned that he was able to organize resistance only at dawn.

The enemy's resistance reached a particular strength in the middle of the day on April 16, when the attacking troops of the 1st Belorussian Front approached the Seelow Heights, where the Germans concentrated their main efforts. Here the attack of rifle divisions quickly bogged down, and a new decision had to be made to continue the offensive.

K.K. Zhukov had two tank armies to develop success. But he planned to bring in these armies after the infantry had mastered this powerful anti-tank obstacle. However, the efforts of the first echelon of the front to break through the defenses at the heights were not enough. In addition, the war was coming to an end, and Georgy Konstantinovich was not going to spare people for the sake of the success of the planned operation. Later he would write in his well-known memoirs: "When preparing the operation, we somewhat underestimated the complexity of the nature of the terrain in the region of the Seelow Heights, where the enemy had the opportunity to organize an insurmountable defense ... First of all, I must take the blame for the underdevelopment of the issue to myself". But a little lower, wishing to share the responsibility with others, he adds: "I think that, if not publicly, then in private reflection, the responsibility for the insufficient readiness to take the Seelow Heights on an army scale will also be assumed by the respective army commanders."

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And even lower: "Now, after a long time, thinking about the plan of the Berlin operation, I came to the conclusion that the defeat of the enemy's Berlin grouping and the capture of Berlin itself could have been carried out somewhat differently."

Marshal was well aware that history does not tolerate subjunctive moods and that his remorse would come later. But he still could not help but dwell on this point, which causes much controversy among historians.

In the afternoon of April 16, the 1st and 2nd Guards Tank Armies of Generals M.E. Katukov and S.I. Bogdanov. Tanks could move only along the roads along which the enemy created a strong anti-tank defense, for which he widely used rapid-fire anti-aircraft guns removed from the air defense of Berlin.

Despite all efforts, on the first day, the Soviet troops failed to complete the task. The heights were taken only on the second day. The losses of the Soviet troops on April 16 were significant.

The fierce struggle to break through the Oder defensive line, the total depth of which reached 30 km, continued. Every day the offensive began after a strong artillery preparation and proceeded with continuous support from artillery fire and air strikes. Tank and rifle formations stubbornly gnawed through the powerful defenses of the enemy with joint efforts. Only on the fourth day, by the end of April 19, did the main strike force of the 1st Byelorussian Front break through the Oder line. At the same time, tank armies, which, according to G.K. Zhukov, were supposed to go to Berlin on the second day of the offensive, failed to break away from the infantry and followed directly in the combat formations of the troops. They were 30 kilometers away from the capital.

In his memoirs, Marshal G.K. Zhukov continues to

repent and

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blame circumstances. In particular, he writes that "in the area of the Seelow Heights, the enemy had the opportunity to organize an insurmountable defense. Being 10-12 kilometers from our initial lines, deeply digging into the ground, especially behind the reverse slopes of the heights, the enemy was able to save his forces and equipment from the fire of our artillery and aviation bombings.

The blow from the Kyustrinsky bridgehead was delivered by the 3rd and 5th shock, 8th guards and 47th armies of generals V.I. Kuznetsova, N.E. Berzarina, V.I. Chuikov and F.I. Petrovich. By the end of the 60s, when the memoirs of Georgy Konstantinovich were published, only Chuikov remained alive, who could no longer or did not want to argue with the former commander of the 1st Belorussian Front. Therefore, the Berlin operation is still perceived as it was described by G.K. Zhukov.

G.K. himself Zhukov has always been particularly tough in matters of command and control. In the Berlin operation, he demanded not to stop the offensive day or night. The commanders of divisions, corps, and even army commanders received his order to transfer their observation posts to the battle formations of units and formations, and for the sake of quickly completing the assigned tasks, reserves should not be spared.

But in practice, all this had little effect on the course of the operation. The troops, especially the tank armies advancing ahead, suffered heavy losses. On April 18, the commander of the 12th Guards Tank Corps, General N.M., was seriously wounded in the 2nd Guards Tank Army. Telyakov, The commander of the 48th Guards Tank Brigade Colonel V.I. Makarov, who just two weeks ago was congratulated on being awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Significantly more soldiers, sergeants and junior officers died.

The slow advance of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front worried Headquarters. Moscow demanded to accelerate the pace of the offensive. Zhukov had to

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listen and reproaches I.V. Stalin. "You shouldn't have brought the 1st Guards Tank Army into action in the area of the 8th Guards Army (that is, to bypass Berlin from the south. - Author), and not where the Stavka demanded," the Supreme Commander sharply scolded his deputy .

Some historians believe that this reproach against G.K. Zhukov was unfair if only because things were no better north of Berlin. North of the Kyustrinsky bridgehead 61st and 1st

Polish army generals P.A. Belova and S.G. Poplavsky in four days wedged into the enemy defenses only 8 km, and the 69th and 33rd armies advancing south of the bridgehead under the command of generals V.Ya. Kolpakchi and V.D. Tsvetaeva - only 6 km.

The 1st Ukrainian Front went on the offensive simultaneously with the 1st Belorussian Front. On the night of April 16, reconnaissance in force was carried out, with the dawn artillery and aviation preparations for the attack began, as well as the installation of a dense smoke screen. The leading edge of the German defense was smoky not only in the 90-km zone, where the shock group of the 1st Ukrainian Front was advancing, but also on the rest of the 300-km line. Such a huge smoke screen was used for the first time during the war years. On the one hand, it had the goal of covering the crossing of troops across the river. Neisse, and on the other hand, to prevent the enemy from determining the direction of the front's strikes.

During a powerful artillery preparation, which lasted almost two and a half hours, the Soviet infantry crossed the Neisse and attacked the enemy. An hour later, heavy bridges were built and tanks of direct support came to the aid of the infantry.

infantry.

The enemy fiercely defended himself, throwing three tank divisions and a tank destroyer brigade to the aid of his Infantry. But Marshal I.S. Konev also constantly stepped up his efforts. The 4th Guards and 25th Tank Corps were introduced into the battle, which

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commanded by generals P.P. Poluboyarov and E.I. Fomins. Then, due to the fact that these corps had too few tanks, the forward detachments of the 3rd and 4th Guards Tank Armies also had to be brought into battle.

By the end of the day, the 3rd and 5th Guards Tank Armies, together with the 13th Army under the command of Generals V.N. Gordova, A.S. Zhadov and N.P. Pukhov broke through to a depth of 13 km. At the same time, it was necessary to overcome not only the resistance of the enemy, but also forests, in which fires started from air strikes and artillery fire. Things went worse in the Dresden direction. The 52nd Army of General K.A., advancing there, Koroteev together with the 2nd Polish Army of General K.K. Sverchevsky managed to penetrate only 4-5 km into the enemy defenses in a small area.

On April 17, the commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front reinforced his main strike force by bringing the 3rd and 4th Guards Tank Armies into battle. Having broken the resistance of the enemy, the tankers of Generals P.S. Rybalko and D.D. Lelyushenko crossed the Spree on the move and the next day they completed the breakthrough of the defensive line, which had a depth of up to 40 km.

Intense fighting flared up on the Dresden direction. Worried about the breakthrough of the defense on the Spree River, the commander of Army Group Center, Field Marshal F. Scherner, concentrated nine divisions in the Görlitz area. With a counterattack to the north on the left flank of the main strike force of the 1st Ukrainian Front, he sought to delay its advance on Berlin.

Without waiting for all the divisions of the counterattack group to concentrate, Field Marshal General ordered on April 18 to deliver the intended strike. The commander of the 52nd Army, General Koroteev, was forced to interrupt the offensive and repel the onslaught of the enemy.

But the counterattack could not change the situation for a long time. Under the cover of the 52nd Army, the 2nd Polish Army

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had to attack. By this time, formations of the 28th Army also began to arrive in the 1st Ukrainian Front, and I.S. Konev ordered her commanding general A.A. Luchinsky to advance to the main direction.

Taking into account that after crossing the Spree, on the way of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front to Berlin, the enemy did not have large reserves, and the 1st Belorussian Front still had to break through a strong defense, the Headquarters decided to turn the tank armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front front to the capital. Relevant instructions I.S. Konev received another April 17 and immediately set the task for the commanders of the 3rd and 4th Guards Tank Armies: after overcoming the Spree, develop an offensive against Berlin in order to break into its southern outskirts on the night of April 21. The task was not easy: it was 120 km to Berlin in a straight line, and this distance had to be overcome with battles in just two days.

Having received the appropriate command, the tank armies of Rybalko and Lelyushenko crossed the Spree on April 18 and rushed north. In an effort to break into Berlin first, by all means, I.S. Konev laid his main hopes on the highly experienced army commander Rybalko. To ensure the quick fulfillment of the assigned task, the front commander reinforced the 3rd Guards Tank Army with an anti-aircraft artillery division, a breakthrough artillery corps, and a fighter air corps.

2] April in the offensive zone of the 3rd Guards Tank Army of I.S. Konev brought the arrived 28th Army into battle, reinforcing it with an artillery division. For the quick transfer of rifle units to the command of the commander of the 28th Army, General A.A. Luchinsky was allocated vehicles.

On the way of the tankers of General P.S. Rybalko to Berlin turned out to be the settlement of Zossen. Here, deep underground, was the main command post of the Wehrmacht

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the one where the headquarters of the operational leadership, headed by General A. Jodl, and the headquarters of the ground forces, headed by General G. Krebs, were located. With the appearance of Soviet tanks, the personnel of both headquarters in a hurry left Zossen and evacuated to Berlin.

Despite the rapid advance, the 3rd Guards Tank Army was unable to complete the task within the specified time frame. Only on the evening of April 22, i.e. With a delay of almost a day, the advanced tank brigades approached Berlin. However, it was not possible to overcome the canal on the move: the defense of the southern outskirts of the city turned out to be STRONG.

The troops of the 1st Belorussian Front were also stubbornly advancing towards Berlin. Having received a message about the attack on the capital of the tank armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front, Marshal G.K. On the evening of April 20, Zhukov sent an urgent directive to the commanders of the 1st and 2nd Guards Tank Armies. They were given "a historic task: to be the first to break into Berlin and hoist the Banner of Victory." To accomplish this task, it was necessary to allocate the best brigade from each corps and "no later than 4 o'clock in the morning on April 21, at any cost, break through to the outskirts of Berlin and immediately report to Stalin and announcements in the press."

However, the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front managed to break through to the city only in the evening, when the 2nd Guards Tank Army had already reached the northeastern outskirts, and with it the rifle formations of the 3rd and 5th shock armies. . The 1st Guards Tank Army, advancing on the southern flank of the main strike force of the Belorussian Front, lagged behind. These troops still had up to 20 km to the capital.

Zhukov was dissatisfied with such results of the hostilities. "The defense of Berlin is very poorly organized," he assured the army commanders in a telegram dated April 22, "and the operation of our troops to take the city is developing very slowly." front commander trebo

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shaft to organize a round-the-clock offensive. The lagging 1st Guards Tank Army was ordered to cross the Spree in the area of the 8th Guards Army and, no later than April 24, capture Tempelhof in the southeast of the capital.

In general, by the end of April 22, the threat of encirclement hung over the enemy, who was defending in Berlin and to the south. Only 40 km separated the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, bypassing Berlin from the north, from the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, advancing on the capital from the south. The headquarters of the Supreme High Command demanded from G.K. Zhukov and I.S. Konev to speed up the encirclement of the Berlin group.

On April 24, the 8th Guards and 1st Guards Tank Armies of the 1st Belorussian Front met with the 3rd Guards Tank and 28th Armies on the southeastern outskirts of Berlin. The next day, the 2nd Guards Tank Army and the 47th Armies, bypassing the capital to the north, joined up with the 4th Guards Tank Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front west of Berlin. The enemy grouping of more than 500 thousand people was not only surrounded, but also cut into two parts: one remained in Berlin, the other to the south of the city.

By April 20, the 2nd Belorussian Front completed preparations for the offensive. By the end of April 19, his troops had completely cleared the interfluvium between the Ost- and West-Oder and, having built bridges across the eastern arm, took up their starting position for forcing the West-Oder. The bulk of the artillery had to be left in front of the Ost-Oder. The flooded interfluvium did not allow placing artillery closer, which made it difficult to effectively support the attack of the front line, which passed behind the main, western, branch of the Oder.

As planned, the offensive of the main forces of the 2nd Belorussian Front began on April 20. According to the new task received by Rokossovsky two days ago, his troops were to, after crossing the Oder, not later than April 22, strike in the southwestern direction.

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on Berlin to help Marshal Zhukov in capturing the capital.

In the 50-km zone south of Stettin, the 65th, 70th and 49th armies were advancing, commanded by Generals P.I. Batov, V.S. Popov and I.T. Grishin. Each army broke through the defenses in a narrow sector from 4 to 6 km, where almost all forces were concentrated. To the north of Stettin, the 2nd shock army was defending. Its task was to demonstrate the forcing of the Oder and prevent the transfer of enemy troops to the direction where the main blow was delivered.

Despite the fact that the armies had nine rifle divisions each, against which only one German infantry division was defending, on April 20, only the 65th and 70th armies managed to capture three small bridgeheads up to one and a half kilometers deep on the left bank of the West Oder. At the same time, the 49th Army, where Rokossovsky concentrated the main forces, failed to cross the river. General Grishin was summed up by reconnaissance: not understanding the intricacies of branches and channels, she did not correctly determine the main channel of the river, and hence the front line of the enemy's defense. The result was deplorable: aviation and artillery struck at an empty place, and the subunits that moved to attack came under destructive enemy fire. The 49th Army crossed the Oder only on April 25th.

2] April Rokossovsky had to transfer the main efforts of the strike force of the front to the right flank in the zone of the 65th Army, which achieved greater success. The maneuver was carried out by retargeting the strikes of the 4th Air Army, regrouping artillery and crossing facilities. By evening, six ferry crossings for cargoes up to 16 tons were built in the section of the crossing of the 65th Army across the West Oder. The capabilities of the army have increased dramatically. In addition, crossings with a capacity of 30-50 tons had been built through the eastern branch by this time, which made it possible to transfer

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to carry heavy equipment, including tanks. On April 24, the entire army was transported across the Oder.

General H. Manteuffel, commander of the German 3rd Panzer Army, which was defending itself against the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front, sent all the reserves to the breakthrough area of the 65th Army. With the support of the artillery of the Stettin fortress, they continuously counterattacked the Soviet troops.

Reflecting these blows, the rifle battalion of Major V.D. Myachin, who only a year ago put on the shoulder straps of a junior lieutenant. On April 22 and 23, Myachin personally led the companies on the attack seven times. For the skillful command of the battalion during the capture and holding of the bridgehead, and with small losses, for personal courage and heroism, the battalion commander was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. On the chest of a talented officer, in addition to the orders of the Red Star, the Patriotic War, Alexander Nevsky and Suvorov, the highest awards of the Motherland were added - the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star of the Hero.

On April 23, heavy pontoons were driven through the channels of the interfluvium and a bridge with a carrying capacity of 60 tons was assembled across the West Oder. The enemy opened heavy artillery fire on it. Although a number of pontoons were damaged, the bridge was quickly restored, and the German batteries that had fired on it were destroyed. The Soviet tanks began crossing without much interference from the enemy.

On April 25, the 1st Guards Tank Corps of General M.F. Panov, having entered the battle on the site of the 65th Army, completed the breakthrough of the main line of defense. He did not manage to achieve greater success: the resistance of the enemy, reinforced by reserves, was growing. On that day, the advance of the 70th Army, advancing in the center of the front's shock group, turned out to be more significant. Taking advantage of the fact that the enemy threw the main forces against the 65th Army, the rifle divisions of the 70th Army pulled ahead and by the end of the day

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moved more than 20 km. Now their path was blocked by the Randov River, along which the second line of German defense passed. The left-flank 49th Army crossed the Oder, using the crossings of the neighboring army, and by evening advanced 5-6 km.

By this time, the strike of the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front was no longer required to help in capturing Berlin. Assessing Stalin's decision to turn the troops of this front to Berlin, Zhukov wrote: "There is such a proverb: 'Hurry - you will make people laugh.' And so it happened with this directive of the Headquarters.

On April 25, Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky was ordered to act in a general direction to the northwest, pressing the enemy to the sea. A new offensive operation of this front began.

The offensive of the Red Army on Berlin changed the situation on the Western Front. On April 15, the commander of Army Group B, Field Marshal V. Model, whose troops were surrounded in the Ruhr, after much deliberation, ordered the soldiers of older and younger ages, who had just been drafted into the army, to go home, the rest, from April 17, stop resistance and surrender or break through the encirclement. However, few wanted to break through. On April 20, mass surrender began. Model himself shot himself the next day. The Western Front of the Wehrmacht ceased to exist.

On April 21, Eisenhower sent through the US military mission in Moscow to the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, General A.I. Antonov information about his plans and offered the line of the Elbe and Mulde rivers to connect the Anglo-American troops with the Soviet ones. Antonov replied consent.

Marshals Zhukov, Konev and Rokossovsky were warned about the possibility of meeting with the troops of the Western Allies on April 20, when they were informed of the signals agreed with the Allies. for mutual

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identification. According to the instructions received, the commanders of the armies were to meet, by agreement with the senior commander of the Allied troops, to establish a time line that would exclude their mixing.

The first meeting took place on April 25 on the Elbe River. As the chief of staff of the 1st Ukrainian Front, General I.E. Petrov, in the Torgau area at 15:00, the advanced units of the 58th Guards Rifle Division met with the reconnaissance groups of the American 69th Infantry Division.

The moment was truly historic: for almost a year, crushing the common enemy, the allied armies advanced towards each other and finally united. Moscow marked the important event with traditional salute: 24 artillery volleys from 324 guns thundered. Until now, the liberation of the capital of a union republic or state has been celebrated in this way. And Stalin's congratulatory order was addressed not to the immediate culprit of the celebration - the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, as was usually done, but to the entire active army. On the same occasion, on April 27, Stalin's appeal to the Red Army and the Allied forces was published. W. Churchill and G. Truman, who became President of the United States after the death of Roosevelt, did the same.

Despite the fact that the event on the Elbe was assessed by the heads of the allied powers as the division of the German troops into two parts, it had a purely symbolic character. Only reconnaissance units of the 1st American Army met with the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front. Its main forces were located at the mutually determined boundary of the river. Mulde, 50 km west of the Elbe. The main forces of the 1st Ukrainian Front reached Mulda later, in early May, preparing for the Prague operation.

The first meeting was followed by mutual visits. On April 26, the commander of the 58th Guards strelko

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the howl of the division, General V.V. Rusakov received the commander of the 69th Infantry Division, General E. Reinhardt. The next day, the commander of the 34th Guards Rifle Corps, General G.V. Baklanov met the commander of the 5th Army Corps, General K. Huebner. Most of all, the gray-haired Americans were surprised and delighted by the youth of the Soviet general, who at that time was in his thirty-fifth year. April 30, General A.S. Zhadov, commander of the 5th Guards Army, hosted a reception in honor of General E. Hodges, commander of the 1st American Army. Two days earlier, at a reception with Marshal Konev, the commander of the 12th US Army Group, General O. Bradley, said: "Our people have always admired the battles and victories of the glorious Red Army, and my soldiers and officers strove to imitate the combat example, which was given to them by the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front.

Return visits were made by Soviet military leaders. Everywhere the soldiers of the allied armies, still hardly aware of the end of the war so disgusted by everyone, met as brothers in arms.

Until the last moment, Hitler and his associates hoped that the counter offensive of the Red Army and the Anglo-American troops would lead to an armed clash, and after that, to the collapse of the alliance of the three great powers. However, their calculations were not justified; there were no skirmishes between the allies, and, consequently, the last illusions of the Nazi leadership on a successful end to the war collapsed irrevocably.

After April 25, the main task of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian and 1st Belorussian fronts was to defeat the enemy groupings surrounded in Berlin and to the south of it. On the advice of his faithful colleague, General A. Jodl, A. Hitler decided to turn his back on the Anglo-American troops and concentrate all efforts on holding Berlin.

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As early as April 20, the Fuhrer intended to fly to South Germany and from there direct the continuation of the war. However, a day later, his plans changed dramatically: he decided to personally lead the defense of the capital and, in case of failure, die here. On the same day, the dictator held the last meeting with his close associates, after which they went to the troops to

organization of assistance to Berlin. Troops also gathered there. Thus, the 12th Army, which until then held the defense along the Elbe against American troops, was hastily transferred to the east. She received an order to break through towards the troops of the 9th and 4th tank armies, surrounded south of Berlin, in order to cut off the armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front, which broke into the capital from the south. Then the united German armies were to advance to the north and break the encirclement of the Berlin garrison.

From the north, the army group of SS Obergruppenführer F. Steiner was sent to help the fascist capital. It was assumed that the actions of the Terlitz group, which continued to strike at the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front advancing on Dresden, would also contribute to the implementation of this plan.

Fortifications on the outskirts of Berlin

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By ending resistance in the West, Hitler intended to create fertile ground for an agreement with the Anglo-American leadership. As General Jodl stated to the Chief of Staff of the Luftwaffe, General K. Koller, in a personal conversation on April 23, "it is completely indifferent what the Americans do on the Elbe. Perhaps it will be possible to prove by this that we want to fight only against the Soviets.

Encircled south of Berlin, the enemy forces, which were based on the 9th Army under the command of General T. Busse, numbered up to 200 thousand people, more than 300 tanks and assault guns, over 2 thousand guns and mortars. The troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts, which encircled this grouping, outnumbered it by almost one and a half in personnel and four times in artillery. Tanks on both sides were equally divided, because the main forces of the tank forces of both Soviet fronts fought for Berlin.

The 1st Ukrainian Front found itself in a very difficult situation. His troops were to act simultaneously in four directions: advancing to the north, storm Berlin; to prevent a breakthrough from the encirclement of the 9th Army to the west, to disrupt the offensive of the 12th Army to the east; repel a counterattack by the Gerlitz grouping from the south. The assault on Berlin and the defeat of the 9th Army had to be carried out in close cooperation with the 1st Belorussian Front, whose troops, in addition, bypassing the capital from the north, went to the Elbe.

The complexity of the upcoming tasks being solved by two fronts required a clear and prompt interaction. Meanwhile, the offensive of the troops in the Berlin direction was still coordinated by I.V. Stalin. But since the Supreme Commander was in Moscow at that time, his reaction to changes in the situation could not be timely. Therefore, in a number of cases, the commanders of fronts, and sometimes even armies, often acted independently.

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Despite the lack of a unified leadership, the operation to encircle and destroy the encircled enemy developed successfully. The command of the 1st Ukrainian Front not only foresaw, but also revealed in time the preparation of the German 9th Army for a breakthrough to the west. I.S. Konev paid the main attention to the organization of defense in the area where General Busse was preparing a strike. So the task was assigned to the 3rd Guards Army, as well as the 28th and 13th armies, which allocated one rifle corps for defense.

Going over to the defense with a front to the east, these troops hastily equipped three defensive zones with a total depth of up to 20 km. At the same time, the 3rd, 69th and 33rd Armies and the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps of the 1st Belorussian Front received the task of dismembering and, in cooperation with the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, destroying the German group south of Berlin with strikes from the northeast.

The 4th Guards Tank and 13th Armies were to act against the 12th Army of the enemy, which continued to advance in a general north-western direction, being by the end of April 25, 50 km west of the encircled enemy forces.

To support the troops, Marshal I.S. Konev singled out six aviation corps, which accounted for three-quarters of the entire force of the 2nd Air Army. In the zone of the 1st Belorussian Front, the main aviation forces supported the troops that stormed Berlin. In the interests of the armies that attacked the 9th army of the enemy, G.K. Zhukov singled out only three attack aviation divisions.

On the night of April 26, the Germans, using forests, secretly concentrated five divisions in a narrow area, but already at dawn aerial reconnaissance of the 1st Ukrainian Front opened them up. Commander of the 4th Bomber Corps, General P.P. Arkhangelsky immediately lifted 70 bombers into the air, which

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rye struck. The enemy was weakened, but nevertheless went on the offensive and attacked the Soviet troops that had not yet had time to dig in.

The blow fell just at the junction of two divisions of the 21st Rifle Corps of General A.A. Yamanova. The Germans advanced in columns. Tanks were moving in the head, which literally rammed the battle formations of the defending troops. As the prisoners showed, they were driven forward not only by the threat of execution for failure to fulfill their combat mission, but also by the fear of the horrors of Siberian penal servitude, strongly inflated by fascist propaganda. Already three hours after the start of the attack, the enemy strike group broke through to a depth of 10-15 km.

In fierce battles, the battalion of the 293rd Guards Rifle Regiment under the command of Captain I.M. Filippovsky. The positions of the battalion were attacked by about two battalions of infantry supported by six tanks and assault guns. On April 26, the enemy tried to break through eight times, but without success. When help approached, the captain raised the companies to attack. They captured 450 Germans alone. For skillful command, personal courage and heroism, Captain I.M. Filippovsky was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, and many officers and soldiers of the battalion were awarded orders and medals.

The broken front of the encirclement was restored thanks to a counterattack by the 25th Panzer Corps, commanded by General E.I. Fomins. The 2nd Air Army of General S.A. Krasovsky. The aircraft crews of the 1st and 2nd Guards Attack Air Corps worked especially hard. In groups of eight to ten attack aircraft, they delivered continuous strikes. The German soldiers could not withstand the raids and scattered through the burning forest.

Troops of the 1st Belorussian Front pushed back Busse's 9th Army from the north. On the morning of April 27, the

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on the offensive, the 3rd Guards Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front under the command of General V.N. Gordova.

The growing danger of annihilation, followed one after another by the formidable orders of A. Hitler, drove the encircled group of Germans to the west, towards the 12th Army. In turn, Field Marshal W. Keitel and General Joll, on whom the Fuhrer entrusted the organization of a counter offensive, demanded the most decisive action from both armies.

Encircled elsewhere, the 9th Army of General Busse and the encircled divisions of the 4th Panzer Army were squeezed by Soviet troops from all sides. In addition to this, they were subjected to heavy air strikes. Choking in the smoke of forest fires, the Germans desperately

trying to get out of this hell. Busse used the night of April 27 to prepare a new breakthrough, and in the morning launched another attack. The day of April 29 turned out to be the most productive for the German troops remaining in the encirclement: they managed to break through 25 km in a narrow, 6-km section. But the counterattacks of the Soviet troops, supported by aviation, forced the enemy to stop further advance. The units that broke through were surrounded in three areas isolated from each other. Less than 30 km.

The 12th Army of General W. Wenck went on the offensive on April 25th. But it didn't last long. 5th Guards Mechanized and 102nd Rifle Corps of Generals I.P. Ermakova and I.M. Puzikov repelled the blow. A day later, enemy activity dropped sharply.

At Keitel's and Jodl's categorical demands, Wenck committed the last two divisions remaining in reserve and on the 29th made another attempt to break through to the 9th Army. But she was not successful either. 2nd Air Army of General S.A. Krasovsky dealt a blow of such force that from a further offensive

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Wenck had to refuse. The next day, Keitel admitted that the attempt to unblock Berlin by strikes from the outside had finally failed, which he was forced to report to Hitler.

Nevertheless, 20,000 enemy soldiers and officers stubbornly fought their way out of the encirclement to join Wenck's army. On the night of May they went to the rear of the 5th Guards Mechanized Corps, which was defending against the 12th Army. Only 3-4 km remained between those leaving the encirclement and Wenck's army.

In this situation, the corps of General Timakov took up a circular defense. To help him, the commander of the 4th Guards Tank Army threw all his reserves. Fierce battles broke out. In an effort to prevent the connection of the enemy, the Soviet troops strained all their forces. Even the wounded did not leave the battle formations.

The decisive role was played by attack aircraft of the 1st Guards Aviation Corps of General V.G. Ryazanov. Through the joint efforts of tankers and pilots, the enemy was defeated.

1] May, the 9th Army and the encircled part of the 4th Panzer Army of the enemy ceased resistance and threw out the white flag. In this encirclement, the Germans lost 60 thousand killed, and 120 thousand people surrendered. Only a few managed to break through to the west. More than 300 tanks and assault guns, 500 cannons and mortars, over 17,000 vehicles and many other property were taken as trophies by the Soviet troops.

At the same time, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front repulsed the counterattacks of the Gerlitz group of Germans. On April 19, its nine divisions struck at the 52nd and 2nd Polish armies advancing in the direction of Dresden, pushing them 20 kilometers to the north.

To help the troops repulsing the counterattack, Marshal I.S. Konev sent formations of the 5th Guards Army, including the 4th Guards, who managed to reach the Elbe

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the tank corps of General P.P. Poluboyarova. Attack and fighter aircraft were allocated to support the troops, and on April 22, part of the bombers. Repelling the enemy counterattacks, the Soviet troops went on the defensive and by the end of April 24 stopped his further advance.

In an effort to alleviate the situation in Berlin, A. Hitler demanded that Field Marshal Scherner, commander of the Army Group Center, resume the offensive of the Görlitz group. With an angle, she again launched a counterattack. German attacks continued until the end of April, when the enemy

completely exhausted its offensive capabilities. After that, having wedged almost 35 km, the Gerlitz group went on the defensive. She could not reach the rear communications of the 1st Ukrainian Front, as Field Marshal Scherner assumed.

The main task of the 1st Belorussian Front, along with which part of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, was to storm Berlin. Back in early March, A. Hitler declared it a fortress city.

The defense of Berlin was prepared carefully. Trenches were dug and barbed wire were erected on the outskirts of suburbs and in parks. There were a large number of anti-tank barriers and obstacles on the streets and squares (barricades, fences, anti-tank ditches, gouges, rail hedgehogs, etc.). All stone houses were turned into strongholds. In addition, underground communications (metro, sewerage) were widely used for the defense of the city. The area of government buildings prepared most strongly for defense, many of which were mined.

To conduct the defense, Berlin was divided into eight sectors, each of which was defended by a garrison of 15 to 25 thousand people. The defense of each building and the area adjacent to it was assigned to specific units.

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In total, by April 25, the encircled garrison of Berlin consisted of 300 thousand people, 3 thousand guns and mortars, 250 tanks and assault guns. It was headed by General G. Weidling, appointed on April 12 as the commandant of the fortress city. Among his closest assistants were many well-known military leaders, many of whom vowed to die, but not to surrender the city.

The troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts that surrounded the capital had about 464 thousand soldiers and officers, 14.8 thousand guns and mortars, almost 1500 tanks and self-propelled artillery installations. During the assault on the city, another 12.5 THOUSAND POLISH Warriors joined them.

As a result, Soviet troops outnumbered the enemy by one and a half times, in artillery and tanks - by 5-6 times. Such superiority would be quite enough to defeat the enemy in the field, but not in the city, where the use of tanks is naturally difficult, and manpower and firepower hidden in stone buildings have great advantages over the attackers.

On April 22, Admiral K. Doenitz, who was supposed to lead the troops in Northern Germany, received a telegram from A. Hitler with the following content: "The battle for Berlin is decisive for the fate of Germany. All other tasks are of secondary importance. Postpone all activities of the naval forces and support Berlin by transferring troops to the city by air, water and land.

To raise the morale of the German troops, the next day, a statement by I. Goebbels was broadcast on the radio, who reported that the Fuhrer himself took over the leadership of the defense of Berlin, and assured that this would give the battle for the capital a European significance. According to him, the entire population came out to defend the city, and party members, armed with panzerfausts, machine guns and carbines, took up posts at the crossroads of streets.

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Soviet attack aircraft over Berlin

Meanwhile, in the current situation, further resistance in Berlin made no sense. The German army was doomed. Even before the encirclement, the city ran out of coal reserves, the supply of electricity was cut off, and on April 21, all enterprises, trams, metro stopped working, water supply and sewerage stopped working. With the release of Soviet troops to the outskirts of the

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kind of garrison and residents lost their food depots. For a week, the population was given 800 grams of bread, 800 grams of potatoes, 150 grams of meat and 75 grams of fat per person. The life of the city was paralyzed, famine began. Further resistance only led to the destruction of the capital and huge casualties, including among civilians.

In order to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, the command of the 1st Belorussian Front on April 23 offered the Berlin garrison to surrender. But there was no answer.

On the day of the 25th and on the night of April 26, more than 2 thousand aircraft of the 16th and 18th air armies, commanded by General S.I. Rudenko and Air Chief Marshal A.E. Golovanov, delivered three massive blows to the city.

In the morning, four combined arms armies and the same number of tank armies from both fronts, advancing from the north, east and south, began to storm Berlin. The blows were delivered on narrow sections of the total 100-km front of the encirclement of the city. Having penetrated into the depths, the Soviet troops cut off one quarter after another and disrupted the enemy's orderly defense system.

The main role in the destruction of the enemy in the buildings was played by assault groups and detachments, which consisted of infantry reinforced with tanks, artillery, sappers and flamethrowers. The infantry, with their support, broke into the building and, advancing from one floor to another, destroyed the soldiers who had settled there. The fighting went on around the clock simultaneously on the ground, in underground communications and in the air. Replacing, the assault units moved forward.

Due to the fact that Berlin was shrouded in the smoke of fires, the pilots had great difficulty distinguishing their own from others. Dive bombers were mainly used to support the assault squads, and the crews were selected by the best of the best. Accurate

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With strikes, they ensured the assault on the most durable buildings. Fighter aircraft not only covered the troops, but also blocked the Berlin garrison from being supplied by air. The famous pilot Major I.N. Kozhedub shot down his last two of the 60 aircraft he destroyed during the war over Berlin, for which he was awarded the third Gold Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union. Among the planes shot down here was a Me-262 jet fighter.

It is impossible not to say about the detachment of gliders of the Dnieper military flotilla, which was attached to the 5th shock army. Up to the river Spree, ten small ships of the detachment were delivered by car. Launched on the night of April 23, under heavy fire, they transferred forward units of the 230th and 301st rifle divisions to the shore occupied by the enemy. The captured bridgehead made it possible to start a ferry crossing. Towing the ferries, the sailors transferred 27 tanks, 600 guns and mortars across the Spree. In just three days, the detachment delivered more than 16 thousand people to the other side.

The feat of the entire personnel of the detachment was awarded, and 9 soldiers were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, by the end of the crossing, only 16 people remained alive in the detachment, and of them only two Heroes were the detachment commander, Lieutenant M.M. Kalinin and the commander of the boat foreman G.P. Kazakov. The rest died, including Heroes of the Soviet Union sailors N.A. Baranov, A.E. Samofalov, V.V. Cherinov, who was not even nineteen years old.

As always, the infantry had the hardest time. Who else, besides foot soldiers, could break into buildings and destroy the enemy in basements and underground utilities? Without infantry, it was dangerous even for tanks to move through the streets. The fact is that the Germans widely used fast cartridges. Even teenagers from the Volga were trained to use this simple anti-tank weapon.

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xsturma; it fired only at 30m, but pierced armor up to 200mm. On the narrow streets of the city, faustpatrons became a thunderstorm for tanks. The 2nd Guards Tank Army alone lost 204 tanks in a week of fighting in Berlin. Half of them turned out to be hit by faustpatrons. That is why the tankers preferred to attack under the cover of submachine gunners, whose task was to destroy the shooters who had settled in the houses, armed with fauspatrons.

At the same time, tank armies, having a small number of motorized infantry in their composition, could not simultaneously provide escort for tank units advancing through the city and create assault groups to capture buildings. The 1st Polish division had to be allocated for joint operations with the 2nd Guards Tank Army, and the 3rd Guards Tank Army was accompanied by three rifle divisions of the 28th Army. The 1st Guards Tank Army advanced jointly with the 8th Guards Army. At the same time, each corps of General M.E. Katukov advanced with one of the rifle corps of General V.I. Chuikov. This interaction solved the problem.

Fight on the streets of Berlin

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However, new difficulties soon arose: all the troops rushed to the center of Berlin - to the Reichstag. Naturally, the zones of operations of troops, including tank armies, narrowed, and they had nowhere to turn around. At this time, the tank brigade was advancing along some street, the width of which allowed, as a rule, two or three tanks deployed in a line to pass, and behind them - three or four self-propelled artillery mounts. The rest stood, suffering needless losses.

The Soviet command, along with the leadership of the hostilities, had to take care of the local population. These duties were assigned to the commander of the 5th shock army, General N.E. Berzarin, appointed military commander of Berlin. Commandant's offices were created in all newly taken districts of the city. Since famine arose in the city, the rear departments of the fronts and armies organized the distribution of food to the townspeople. Soviet soldiers themselves shared food with children, women and the elderly.

On April 26, Potsdam, a suburb of the capital, was cut off from the group surrounded in Berlin. The next day, the 47th Army of General F.I. Perkhovich, together with formations of the 2nd and 4th Guards Tank Armies, destroyed the German troops cut off there.

In Berlin itself, thanks to blows from the north and south, the enemy was squeezed into a narrow, no more than 2-4 km, strip, stretching from west to east for almost 20 km. By the evening of April 28, the enemy was cut into three parts. Communication between them was preserved only through underground communications. So that the Soviet troops could not use the metro, A. Hitler ordered the opening of the locks on the Spree, although he could not help but know that the metro section between Leipzigerstrasse and Unter den Linden, where thousands of Berliners were hiding at the stations, would be flooded.

At 22:00, General Weidling reported to A. Hitler that the ammunition remained for approximately two days of battle

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and that, in his opinion, further resistance is futile. The general proposed a plan to break through the remnants of the German units to the west, to the Anglo-American troops. "The Fuhrer thought for a long time," Weidling said already in captivity. "He regarded the situation as hopeless." A. Hitler rejected the idea of a breakthrough.

Soviet troops stubbornly made their way to the Reichstag. From the north, the 3rd shock army of General V.I. was advancing across the Spree River to the Reichstag. Kuznetsova. From the southeast through tight

The built-up part of the city was attacked by the guards of the 8th Guards and 1st Guards Tank Armies. General V.I. Chuikov set the task for the corps: on April 28, to go to the Reichstag area and take it at all costs. The 3rd Guards Tank Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front advanced from the south. Her 9th mechanized corps, General I.P. Sukhova had just reached the Landwehr Canal. On the morning of April 29, he was supposed to cross it, and then move along Goeringstrasse to the Reichstag.

In accordance with the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of April 23, the dividing line between the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts in the north ended with the Anhalt railway station, located in the central part of the city, 2 km south of the Reichstag. On April 28, troops of the 1st Belorussian Front captured the station.

"This was a violation of the established border, since the station was part of the offensive zone of the 1st Ukrainian Front. Even more than the command of the 1st Belorussian Front, the General Staff and the Headquarters were to blame for it, which failed to ensure the interaction of the two fronts at the proper level, sending them to the same goal. The main reason for the mixing of troops was the untimely demarcation of the areas of operation of the fronts.

With the beginning of the Berlin operation, the border between the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts was defined only to a depth of 50 km - up to

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Lubben. Despite the fact that the troops of Marshal Konev broke into Berlin on April 21, the Stavka established a dividing line between the fronts in the city only on April 23. Difficulties were not long in coming. I.S. Konev and G.K. Zhukov began to receive one report after another from his troops that their own aircraft were attacking them. It was impossible to figure out which front's aviation was to blame for this under those conditions.

The boundary line appointed on April 23, while streamlining the actions of the troops on land, did not eliminate the confusion in the air. As we moved towards the center of Berlin, it grew. Pilots often made mistakes. As reported by the command of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, [the 6th Air Army, which was part of the 1st Belorussian Front, inflicted an accidental blow on the 6th Guards Tank Corps, causing serious damage to it. It happened that the tankers of General P.S. Rybalko was bombed by aviation from his own front. It got to the point that General P.S. Rybalko asked I.S. Konev completely remove aviation. When all the troops rushed to the Reichstag, even artillery sometimes fired on their neighbors.

On April 28, advancing westward south of the Landwehr Canal, the 29th Guards Rifle Corps of the 8th Guards Army crossed the railroads that go north to the Anhalt and Potsdam stations. At the same time, the advance of the 9th mechanized corps of the army of General Rybalko to the north, along the railways, to the Landwehr Canal, fell just behind the rear of the 8th Guards Army. The consequences of moving troops perpendicular to each other could be unpredictable.

At 20:45 I.S. Konev sent G.K. A telegram to Zhukov: "According to Rybalko's report, the armies of Chuikov and Katukov received the task of advancing to the northwest along the southern bank of the Landwehr Canal and thus cut the battle formations of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front advancing to the north. Please change direction

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offensive of the armies of Chuikov and Katukov. A copy of the telegram was immediately handed over to Moscow to the Chief of the General Staff, General A.I. Antonov.

Having received a telegram from the commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front, G.K. Zhukov reported to I.V. Stalin that the offensive of I.S. Konev in the rear of the 8th Guards and 1st Guards Tank Armies created confusion and mixing of units, which made it extremely difficult to control the battle. Then he

concluded that "their further movement in this direction can lead to even greater mixing and make management more difficult."

G.K. Zhukov asked to establish a new dividing line between the fronts or to replace the troops of I.S. Konev in Berlin by the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front. Literally a few minutes later, Moscow established such a dividing line that required the withdrawal of the armies of Rybalko and Luchinsky from the city to the west.

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As a result, behind the dividing line, which was established from 24:00 on April 28, was the 9th mechanized corps, which continued to advance towards the Reichstag. But, having received the Directive of the Headquarters, I.S. Konev ordered P.S. Rybalko withdraw the troops. "He (General Rybalko. — Auth.) literally had to overcome himself in order to fulfill my order," Marshal Konev recalled after the war. "Ilyane is inclined to condemn him for these personal experiences that are well understood by me."

The 3rd shock army was the first to reach the Reichstag. Advancing from the north, its 79th Rifle Corps broke through to the bridge over the Spree and, after fierce fighting, captured it on the night of April 29th. Only 500 m remained from the bridge to the Reichstag, but they turned out to be extraordinarily difficult.

The Nazis defended the Reichstag literally with the last of their strength. The area in front of the building was occupied by selected SS units and a Volkssturm battalion. The previous night, three companies of the naval school from Rostock arrived here to reinforce. Almost 5,000 German soldiers and officers concentrated at the walls of the Reichstag, whose combat operations were supported by three field artillery divisions and an anti-aircraft artillery division.

In engineering terms, the defense was also prepared quite carefully. The defense system on the outskirts of the building included three lines of trenches covered with minefields and an anti-tank ditch filled with water. 15 reinforced concrete pillboxes were built in the most important areas. Communication passages connected trenches with the cellars of the Reichstag, where large stocks of weapons, ammunition, medicines and food were concentrated.

The assault on the Reichstag began before dawn on 30 April. The 150th and 171st Rifle Divisions, commanded by Ge

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Neral V.M. Shatilov and Colonel A.I. Bad luck. The attackers were met with a sea of fire from various types of weapons, and soon the attack bogged down.

The first attempt to take possession of the building on the move ended in failure. A thorough preparation of the assault began. To support the infantry attack only for direct fire, 135 guns, tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts were concentrated. Dozens more cannons, howitzers and rocket launchers fired from closed positions. From the air, the attackers were supported by squadrons of the 283rd Fighter Division of Colonel S.N. Chirvy.

Runs under fire

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Storming the Reichstag

At 12 o'clock artillery preparation began. Half an hour later the infantry went on the assault. She had only 250 m left to reach her intended goal, and it seemed that success had already been ensured. "Everything roared and rumbled around," recalled Colonel F.M. Zinchenko, whose regiment was part of the 150th Infantry Division. — It might have seemed to some of the commanders that his fighters, if

have not yet reached, then they are about to achieve their cherished goal ... So they flew on the command of the report. After all, everyone so wanted to be the first! .. "

General V.M. Shatilov, first by telephone and then in writing, informed the commander of the 79th Rifle Corps, General S.N. Perevertkin that at 14:25 the rifle battalions under the command of captains S.A. Neustroev and V.I. Davydov broke into the Reichstag and hoisted a banner on it. At this time, units continue to clear the building from the Germans.

The long-awaited news spread further—to the headquarters of the 3rd Shock Army and the 1st Belorussian Front. This was reported by Soviet radio, followed by

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border radio stations. The Military Council of the 1st Belorussian Front, by order of April 30, already congratulated the soldiers on the victory, declared gratitude to all soldiers, sergeants, officers of the 171st and 150th rifle divisions and, of course, General S.N. Perevertkin and ordered the Military Council of the Army to present the most distinguished for awards.

After receiving the news about the fall of the Reichstag, military cameramen, photojournalists, journalists rushed to it, among them the famous writer B.L. Gorbатов. What they saw was disappointing: the assault battalions were still fighting on the outskirts of the building, where there was not a single Soviet soldier and not a single flag.

The third attack began at 18:00. Together with the attacking battalions of the 674th and 380th rifle regiments, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel A.D. Plekhanov, Colonel F.M. Zinchenko, two groups of volunteers were advancing, led by the adjutant of the commander of the 79th rifle corps, Major M.M. Bondar and the commander of the control battery of the commander of artillery of the corps, captain V.N. Makovetsky. At the initiative of the command and the political department of the corps, these groups were created specifically for hoisting flags made in the corps over the Reichstag.

This attack was successful: the battalions of captains S.A. Neustroeva, V.I. Davydov, Senior Lieutenant K.Ya. Samsonova and groups of volunteers broke into the building, about which F.M. Zinchenko reported to General V.M. Shatilov. He repeatedly demanded throughout the afternoon to break into the Reichstag and, which worried him most of all, to hoist a banner on it. The report pleased the division commander and at the same time upset him: the banner had not yet been installed. The general ordered to clear the building of the enemy and "immediately install the banner of the Military Council of the Army on its dome!". To quickly

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to carry out the task, the division commander appointed F.M. Zinchenko as commandant of the Reichstag.

However, Colonel F.M. Zinchenko understood, as he wrote after the war, "that neither in the evening nor during the night the Reichstag can be completely cleared, but the banner must be erected at any cost! ..". He ordered to recapture as many rooms as possible from the enemy before dark, and then give the personnel a rest.

To hoist the banner of the Military Council of the Army, handed over to the regiment on April 26, the commander assigned a group led by the political worker of the battalion, Lieutenant A.P. Berest. The sergeants M.A. Egorov and M.V. On the night of May 1, Kantaria hoisted a flag on the Reichstag. Two days later it was replaced by a large red flag.

The removed flag was sent to Moscow on a special flight with military honors on June 20. It began to be revered as the Banner of Victory, which is currently kept in the Central Museum of the Armed Forces of Russia.

It should also be noted that in addition to the banner of the Military Council of the Army, many other flags were strengthened on the Reichstag building. The first flag was hoisted by the group of captain V.N. Makov, who attacked along with Neustroev's battalion. Volunteers headed by the captain, senior sergeants A.P. Bobrov, G.K. Zagitov, A.F. Lisimenko and Sergeant M.P. Minin immediately rushed to the roof of the Reichstag and fixed the flag on one of the sculptures on the right tower of the house. It happened at 22:40, which was two or three hours before the hoisting of the flag, which history was destined to become the Banner of Victory.

A large group of soldiers was presented for awards, and the entire group of Captain V.N. Makov, at the request of the commander of the 79th Rifle Corps, to the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. However, by order of the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front of May 18, 1945, they are honored

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whether only the Order of the Red Banner. The same award was received by M.A. Egorov and M.V. Kantaria, and they were awarded the title of Hero together with the commanders of the battalions that stormed the Reichstag V.I. Davydov, S.A. Neustroev and K.Ya. Samsonov only a year later - on May 8, 1946, on the first anniversary of the Victory over Nazi Germany.

At the end of April, the Imperial Chancellery, in whose underground shelter Hitler took refuge, was connected to the outside world only by radio communication. The Fuhrer, still hoping for outside help, kept asking when the troops would release the blockade of the capital. Finally, on April 30, the answer came. Keitel radioed that Busse's 9th army had not escaped from the encirclement, and Wenck's 12th army could not advance on Berlin. Having lost all hope of salvation, Hitler at 15:30 (Central European time) shot himself. Later, a number of "works" appeared devoted to the miraculous salvation of the Fuhrer, but none of them was based on a scientific basis.

On the night of May 1, a German truce officer arrived at the location of the troops of the 8th Guards Army with a package addressed to the Soviet command. It contained a request to establish the time and place of the front line crossing by the Chief of the General Staff of the Wehrmacht Ground Forces, General G. Krebs, for a message of particular importance. The request was granted, and at 3 o'clock Krebs was delivered to the commander of the army, General V.I. Chuikov. The Chief of the General Staff reported on the suicide of A. Hitler, on the composition of the new German government, and conveyed the appeal of Goebbels and Bormann to the High Command of the Red Army with a request for a temporary cessation of hostilities in Berlin and the start of peace negotiations between Germany and the USSR.

The message was handed over to Marshal G.K. Zhukov, who, in turn, reported him to Moscow, allocating for negotiations with the German leadership in

Berlin of his deputy general V.D. Sokolovsky. Soon I.V. called. Stalin: "Tell Sokolovsky that no negotiations, except for unconditional surrender, should be conducted either with Krebs or with other Nazis."

Answer I.V. Stalin was brought to the attention of General Krebs, who at 9 o'clock left for the German troops to transmit the answer of the Soviet command. At 18 o'clock the answer came with the rejection of the unconditional surrender of the garrison.

By the way, the negotiations did not lessen the bitterness of the enemy's resistance; after the refusal to capitulate, the Soviet troops intensified their attacks on the enemy. On May 2, at 1 am Moscow time, the radio station of the 79th Guards Rifle Division, which was part of the 8th Guards Army, received a radio message in Russian: "Please cease fire. By 12:50 pm (at night — Auth.) Berlin time, we are sending truce envoys to the Potsdam Bridge."

At the indicated time, a German officer arrived on the bridge, who, on behalf of General Weidling, announced the readiness of the Berlin garrison to end the resistance. On the morning of May 2, Weidling and

a group of officers subordinate to him surrendered. According to the general, he made such a decision on his own when he learned that Goebbels had poisoned himself.

Weidling was asked to give a written order for the surrender of the garrison troops subordinate to him, which he did. Soon, at the request of the Soviet command, a similar order was issued on behalf of the German government by Goebbels' deputy G. Fritzsche.

Surrender orders were transmitted by amplifying radio sets to the German troops. A mass surrender began. On May 2, 134,700 surrendered. Among them were soldiers and officers from various units and various branches of the armed forces, military officials, military police officers.

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Winners

Nevertheless, individual armed groups of fascists continued, contrary to orders, to break through to the west. There were two largest ones: one (numbering about 17 thousand people) broke through from Berlin, the other (up to 30 thousand soldiers and officers) - from Spandau. Together with them, about 300 prominent functionaries of the Nazi Party came out of the encirclement.

The Soviet command took the necessary measures to prevent the exit of these groups. On the paths of their movement, fire damage by artillery and attacks by tank troops were planned. As a result, both groups were dismembered into parts and were defeated on the same day.

So Berlin fell. Columns of prisoners moved dejectedly through the streets of the defeated capital. Generals and officers walked ahead of the columns. Many of the prisoners were wounded and supported by their comrades. The surviving residents of Berlin silently looked at the columns of prisoners, trying to see their relatives and friends. And next to it are crowds of jubilant Soviet soldiers who are wildly celebrating their victory. The usual picture of the final of any WAR ...

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Berlin fell, but the war was still going on. Since April 26, the 2nd Belorussian Front has been advancing in a northwestern direction, trying to pin the 3rd Panzer Army of General H. Manteuffel to the Baltic Sea. Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky increased the strength of his strikes against the enemy. In addition to his three armies, the 2nd shock army of General I.I. also went on the offensive. Fedyuninsky. All the armored, mechanized and cavalry corps that had crossed the Oder entered the battle. With the support of the 4th Air Army, General K.A. Vershinin, they rapidly advanced into the depths.

Towards the troops of K.K. Rokossovsky, the 21st Army Group of the Allied Forces was advancing. It was commanded by British Field Marshal B. Montgomery. In the end of April

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English troops crossed the Elbe and, without meeting resistance, quickly went east. On May 3, the garrison of Hamburg surrendered to them without a fight. On the morning of May 5, German troops and naval forces ceased combat operations in Holland and Denmark, in the north-west of Germany and the islands of the North Sea.

However, the Wehrmacht continued to fight against the Red Army. The commander of the Vistula Army Group, which included the 3rd Panzer Army, received an order from Admiral Doenitz, who became Hitler's successor, to conduct military operations in such a way as to withdraw as much of his forces as possible to the west, behind the Demitz-Wismar line, i.e. e. into the combat zone of British and American troops.

The 2nd Belorussian Front followed closely behind the 3rd Panzer Army, although during the retreat the enemy mined roads and blew up bridges. By stubborn resistance on the defensive lines prepared along the rivers, canals and in the inter-lake defile, he sought to delay the persecutors.

But the Soviet troops continued their offensive. On May 2, the 2nd shock and 65th armies reached the coast of the Baltic Sea. The 70th and 49th Armies, pursuing the divisions of the 3rd Panzer and the newly formed 21st Armies, advanced to the west. The Soviet troops were only 20-30 km away from joining Field Marshal Montgomery's army group.

The main forces of Montgomery at this time were advancing north to the Baltic Sea. For cover from the east, the field marshal assigned one American corps. On May 4, the Soviet troops at the line of Wismar, Schwerin, Demitz united with the allies, but the enemy disappeared somewhere without a trace. It turned out that two days ago the commanders of the 3rd Panzer and 21st Armies of the Wehrmacht, Generals Manteuffel and K. Tippelskirch, established contact with the Americans. At the very last moment, when the Soviet troops were about to approach, both German armies crossed the line of the American front.

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and they laid down their weapons. At the same time, Manteuffel with his 200,000th group surrendered to one American infantry division.

It is important that during the entire period of hostilities the 2nd Belorussian Front did not allow the enemy to transfer a single division to Berlin. Even those units that the German command had already begun to move from near Danzig to the capital were pinned down and defeated.

The troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, which during the assault on Berlin bypassed it from the north and south, were now advancing towards the Elbe. On May 2, the advanced detachments of the 61st Army of General P.A. Belova met south of Wittenberg with the 84th Infantry Division of the American troops. In the period from 4 to 7 May they reached the Elbe; linking up with the 9th American Army, the 1st Polish and 47th armies. Retreating under their onslaught, the 12th Army of General Wenck, after preliminary negotiations with the Americans, crossed to the western bank of the river and surrendered to them. According to Tippelskirch, at that time "about 100,000 people were saved from Russian captivity."

Still further south, having replaced the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, the line of the Elbe River was occupied by the 3rd, 69th and 33rd armies of the 1st Belorussian Front. Two rifle divisions of the 13th Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front came out to the Mulde River, joining with the main forces of the 1st American Army, while its main forces were moving south from May 2, preparing for an attack on Prague .

The Baltic Fleet, commanded by Admiral V.F. Tributs. On April 22, People's Commissar of the Navy Admiral N.G. Kuznetsov demanded from V.F. Tributs, immediately after the completion of the defeat of the Germans in Königsberg and Danzig, to support the offensive of the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front along the sea coast. V.F. Tributs sought to prevent the evacuation of German troops from East Prussia and Courland to the ports of the western part of

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the Baltic Sea. To accomplish the assigned tasks, the fleet used the air force, torpedo and patrol boats, minesweepers and submarines deployed in positions.

As before, large surface ships remained in Kronstadt, deprived of the opportunity to leave the Gulf of Finland for the open sea due to the difficult mine situation.

At the beginning of May, the aviation of the Baltic Fleet launched massive strikes against the enemy's naval base in Swinemünde. The success exceeded all expectations: the German battleship Schlesien was sunk, six transports, three destroyers, several minesweepers and patrol boats were destroyed or damaged. Troops of the 2nd Byelorussian Front, using naval strikes, captured Swinemünde and the island of Rügen on May 5-6.

On the evening of May 7, the commanders of the Soviet fronts operating against Germany received a directive from the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, which stated that the German Armed Forces both on the Western and Eastern Fronts on May 8 from 23:00 CET, in accordance with the Reims agreement, must capitulate. The Headquarters ordered by any means to notify the command and troops of the enemy about this, to demand that they lay down their arms and surrender, and in the event of continued resistance, to deliver decisive blows. True, there was no one to resist in the zone of the 1st and 2nd Belorussian fronts. Only the enemy grouping concentrated in southern Germany and Czechoslovakia, as well as the Wehrmacht naval forces in the Baltic Sea, evaded capitulation.

So, the Berlin operation was successfully completed. The 1st and 2nd Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts completed the task assigned to them. From April 16 to May 8, advancing to a depth of 160 to 220 km, they captured Berlin and joined with the Anglo-American troops. In such a short time

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the Naya Army defeated 93 German divisions, a large number of individual regiments and battalions; about 480 thousand prisoners of war, 11 thousand guns and mortars, more than 1.5 thousand tanks and assault guns, 4.5 thousand combat aircraft were captured. Such a high efficiency was not achieved in any of the earlier operations of the Great Patriotic War.

The Berlin operation contains a lot of instructive information and rightfully constitutes our national military pride. If at Stalingrad the defeat of the 300,000-strong enemy grouping took more than two months, then the destruction of the half-millionth group surrounded in the Berlin operation took the Soviet command only seven days.

Nevertheless, the evaluation of the Berlin operation contains many exaggerations inspired by the euphoria of the victorious end of the war. First of all, it must be remembered that the general military-political environment in which the operation was carried out was especially favorable. Germany waged an armed struggle on two fronts, simultaneously repelling blows from the east and west. HERE, left alone, was now confronted by powers that had a strong economy, huge human resources, and powerful armed forces.

And with all this, the troops of the three Soviet fronts and the forces of the Baltic Fleet lost 361,367 people killed, wounded and missing in three weeks of the offensive. The fronts lost 2,108 guns and mortars, 1,997 tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts, and 917 combat aircraft.

The Berlin operation is listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the bloodiest battle of our time. 3.5 million people, 52,000 guns and mortars, 7,750 tanks and 11,000 aircraft took part in it from both sides.

Of course, such huge losses of Soviet and Polish troops are a consequence, first of all, of the
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strong resistance of the Germans. Their fear was too great that the time had come to answer for the numerous atrocities committed in the occupied territory of the USSR.

However, the actions of the Red Army also suffered from shortcomings. First of all, it was the haste with the start of the offensive, caused by political motives: the desire to get ahead of the Anglo-American allies in capturing Berlin. The frontal attack of the 1st Belorussian Front on Berlin was unsuccessful, which led to the need to break through the enemy's defenses in the strongest place.

Recognizing the shortcomings in the attack on Berlin, Marshal G.K. Zhukov wrote in his memoirs: "The capture of Berlin should immediately, and without fail, be entrusted to two fronts: the 1st Belorussian and the 1st Ukrainian ... There could, of course, be another option: to entrust the capture of Berlin one 1st Belorussian Front, reinforcing its left wing with at least two combined arms and two tank armies, one aviation army and the corresponding artillery and engineering units.

But one must understand that the 1st Belorussian Front could receive such reinforcement only at the expense of the 1st Ukrainian Front, that is, at the expense of I.S. Konev, who himself also wanted to take the German capital. But I.S. Konev, 20 years after the war, admitted that after the encirclement of Berlin, there was no need to help the 1st Belorussian Front in storming the city.

Despite all subsequent talk and research, the fall of Berlin was the crowning achievement in the war against Nazi Germany. Soviet soldiers entered this city victorious, and a red flag was raised over the Reichstag. To commemorate this event, the medal "For the Capture of Berlin" was instituted. They handed it over to the direct participants in the storming of the city - 1082 thousand

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soldiers, sergeants and officers of the Red Army and the Polish Army.

For the Berlin operation in the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts, 1,141,000 soldiers received orders and combat medals. G.K. Zhukov became three times Hero of the Soviet Union, I.S. Konev and K.K. Rokossovsky were awarded the second Gold Star. The honorary title of Berlin was given to 187 units and formations.

But even after the Soviet troops successfully stormed Berlin, there were still cities on the territory of Germany, turned into strong strongholds, the garrisons of which were not going to surrender. One of these cities was Spandau. °— The captain of the reserve V.S. Gall, at that time an officer of the political department of the 47th Army:

"... The end of April 1945. Troops of the 47th Army of the 1st Belorussian Front liberated one of the western suburbs of Berlin and fought their way towards Brandenburg. The citadel of Spandau remained in the rear of the army, since it was not possible to take it on the move and the advancing units bypassed the fortress. She no longer had a significant influence on the development of further events. But its guns kept the bridge across the Havel River under fire, along which our troops, military equipment, and vehicles with ammunition moved in a continuous stream. It was necessary to capture the citadel. Behind its walls were not only 24 Nazi officers and over 200 soldiers, but also their families, as well as hundreds of local residents, mainly old people, women and children.

"The fascists who have settled in the fortress cannot but understand that they are in a hopeless situation. To avoid unjustified losses, the commander of the

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Miei decided to persuade them to surrender without a fight," said the head of the political department, Colonel M.Kh. Kalashnik. — This task is mainly entrusted to the officers of Major Grishin's squad.

On April 29, in the covered body of a powerful loudspeaker, we went to Spandau. The day was overcast and cold. Through the window one could see the ruins of Charlottenburg, the factory

corps of Siemensstadt. The war was drawing to a close, and each of us was thinking about his own...

The propaganda machine drove into Spandau. The town looked like other suburbs of Berlin: low houses, narrow streets, on the outskirts of a small forest. Behind it was the citadel, and beyond it was the river. Here, in the forest, we set to work. At a convenient place, they set the car with loudspeakers in the direction of the fortress and began to transmit: "Soldiers and officers! The citadel is surrounded by Soviet troops. Help is nowhere to be found. Further resistance is pointless. Fortress walls will not save you from certain death. Your only salvation is surrender. Send out the parliamentarians!"

We broadcast this appeal of our command in German for several hours, making short pauses. During the pauses, they waited to see if the parliamentarians would appear. But they weren't. Local residents, relatives of the soldiers of the garrison, also spoke before the microphone. They called on their husbands, brothers and fathers to surrender immediately in order to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. When this did not bring the desired result, a group of German women asked permission to go by themselves to the citadel, talk to the commandant and officers and persuade them to surrender. Having received the approval of Colonel M. Kalashnik, Major V. Grishin agreed. The women, taking with them letters from the burgomaster and other citizens of Spandau asking for surrender, set off with a white flag. Together with

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Hans Ulmer, the representative of the Free Germany National Committee, went with them. The delegates returned upset: for almost an hour they talked through the embrasures with the officers of the fortress, handed them letters, but did not succeed.

From the dawn of the next day, they decided to make another attempt to avoid the assault. Major Grishiniya, taking a white flag, set off. The closer we got to the fortress, the better we saw it. Towers, walls, embrasures darkened by time. There was also a moat, though without water. A bridge is thrown over it, although it is heavy. On this bridge we approached the massive gates of the citadel. They are barricaded, there was a "tiger" in front of them. The barrel of his gun is torn apart, the caterpillars are broken, the armor is covered with rust.

No one called us, we didn't see anyone, we only noticed that in the loopholes and embrasures the barrels of machine guns and machine guns turned in our direction. Since the "linguistic" part of the negotiations lay with me, I had to get down to business.

— Hallo! - I say loudly in front of the huge gates, cursing to myself that no one came out to meet us.

- What you need? A VOICE called from somewhere above.

We want to speak with the commandant.

- Wait.

A few minutes later, two German officers appeared on a disproportionately small balcony located above the gate.

"I am the commandant of the citadel," one of them said. — What do you want?

The balcony is high. To continue the conversation, you need to throw back your head and almost scream. It's inconvenient and humiliating.

- Our conversation is more expedient to conduct in the best conditions.

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The commandant silently nodded and just as silently gave someone a sign with his hand. Two soldiers came out onto the balcony, fixed something at the railing, and suddenly a rope ladder flew to the ground. Both officers descended one by one.

"The commandant of the fortress, Colonel Professor Jung.

"Deputy Commandant Lieutenant Colonel Koch," they introduced themselves.

We named ourselves. Recalling the imminent end of the war, that the Soviet troops near Brandenburg, explained the senselessness of the resistance of the citadel garrison, and also outlined the conditions of surrender (saving life, medical care for the sick and wounded, adequate food).

Jung and Koch stepped aside and conferred quietly. We can now examine them in more detail. The colonel is elderly, almost an old man. Wrinkled face. Short-cropped gray hair is visible from under a cap with a high crown. Behind iron-rimmed spectacles are dull gray eyes. Around the neck is an overly spacious overcoat collar, sagging narrow shoulders. All this did not harmonize well with the silvery twist of his epaulettes. Apparently, the colonel is not a regular military man.

Koch is somewhat shorter and younger. The overcoat sat like a glove on his stocky figure. There was a blush on her full glossy cheeks. Tenacious, as if probing all brown eyes.

The officers approached us. The Colonel frowned.

"I would have agreed to capitulate on the terms offered by your command," he said. "But there is an order from the Fuhrer: if the commandant of a besieged fortress or the commander of a surrounded formation voluntarily surrenders, then any officer subordinate to him can and is obliged to shoot him and lead the defense. Therefore, my sole decision to capitulate would not do any good, - he smiled bitterly, - neither you nor me. I propose that my deputy inform

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to all officers of the garrison your terms of surrender and returned with their decision.

Lieutenant Colonel Koch soon returned. The officers of the citadel did not give their consent to surrender.

"If by 15 o'clock we do not receive a response from you to the proposal to capitulate, we will begin to storm the fortress," said Major Vasily Grigorievich Grishin.

Soon Major Grishin and I arrived in Spandau and reported to the army command on the results of the negotiations. I was ordered to return to the appointed meeting place and wait for the truce truant. This is on the same edge of the forest, near the same trenches.

Since all our attempts to persuade the garrison of the citadel to lay down their arms were mostly known to the fighters, they asked many questions, being interested in the details of the negotiations. Someone even started a dispute with a colleague, whether it was worth spending so much effort, when it is still unknown how everything will end, it would not be easier to knock out the Germans without any delay. I answered almost mechanically: fatigue was showing, and at the same time anxiety about the outcome of the case did not leave.

Gradually, everyone fell silent, began to prepare for battle. There were only a few minutes left until 15 o'clock when one of the soldiers excitedly announced:

"Comrade Captain, let's go!"

Got out of the trench, went towards. This is Colonel Jung and Lieutenant Colonel Koch with a white flag.

"Please inform your command, captain," Jung said, "that the citadel garrison has decided to capitulate.

Some time later, units of the 605th Rifle Regiment entered the fortress through the unbarricaded gates, and our machine gunners began to take the soldiers and officers of the garrison that had laid down their arms to the assembly point for prisoners of war.

The commandant and his deputy approached Major Grishin and me.

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"We would like to say goodbye to you," Koch said in perfect Russian. Noticing our surprise, he explained: — I lived in St. Petersburg for several years and speak Russian a little.

Then we realized: it was not without reason that the lieutenant colonel was always nearby during our recent visit to the citadel. It's good that we didn't drop a single superfluous word! ..

There are many women, children, old people in the yard. From day to day, for years, Goebbels' propaganda inspired them to hate the Soviet Army, and now they looked at our soldiers with fear.

Through the mouthpiece, we twice transmitted the order:

"The civilian population can leave the fortress and go home.

Joy transformed the faces of peaceful Germans. In a noisy crowd they rushed to the gate. A young woman with a child in her arms separated from her and stopped in front of Grishin. In eyes -
happy tears.

— I know you came to persuade our officers to surrender. You saved them, our children, all of us life. We won't forget this!

The garrisons of other cities also resisted. Others, finding themselves in a blockade, also did not give up for some time, hoping for a miracle. But, as you know, the miracle did not happen.

NIGHT STORM OF THE CITY

As the experience of the Great Patriotic War testifies, the night assault on the city was characterized by high efficiency. This was forced to admit and the enemy. The former referent of the General Staff of the Land Forces of Nazi Germany, General E. Middeldorf noted, in particular: "The Russians drew the right conclusions from their rich experience in conducting night operations. They began to carry out a night offensive with the assignment of tasks to the troops, as a rule, to a considerable depth ... This often brought them success.

It should be emphasized that the widespread use of night operations, their development from tactical to operational frameworks has become a new phenomenon in the art of war. According to statistics, over the years of the war, more than 40 cases (table) of night assaults on cities were noted with a successful outcome for the Soviet troops. It is also characteristic that the noted practice manifested itself already in the first year of the war. Hak, in conditions of limited visibility, on December 9, 1941, the soldiers of the 348th rifle division liberated the ancient Russian city of Rogatevo, on December 19, during the Kaluga operation of the 49th Army unit (commander - Lieutenant General I.G. Zakharkin) stormed the city of Tarusa. On the night of December 28, 1943, the soldiers of the 8th Guards Corps under the command of General S.M. Krivoshein during the Zhytomyr-Berdichev operation, the city of Kazatin was liberated from occupation. As a result of a night assault on the formations of the 3rd and 1st Guards Tank Armies, by dawn on July 27, 1944, the fortress city of Przemyśl (Pshemysl) gained freedom. Soviet troops by night assault on the ovl

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divided such major administrative centers as Kharkiv, Zaporozhye, Chernihiv, Kyiv, the capitals of Hungary and Austria - Budapest and Vienna.

In the organization of night combat, including the assault on settlements, a number of features can be seen.

The commander (commander), having received the task, usually made a decision on the map, after which he went (if time allowed, then repeatedly) to the area, trying to carry out reconnaissance with the commanders of formations (units), as well as attached and supporting means, before dark. chiefs of military branches and services. If there was time, reconnaissance was carried out from several points. Particular attention was paid to identifying the most vulnerable places in the enemy's defense, starting with the most distant possible approaches to the fortifications and enemy outposts from the city. On the ground, the commander outlined sectors, the commanders of formations and units - the objects of attack and the direction of advance to them, established the initial lines for deployment, determined the procedure for conducting reconnaissance of obstacles in the way of movement in order to eliminate them in advance. It also established boundaries and areas on which artillery would fire. At the end of the reconnaissance, the commander assigned combat missions to his subordinates and issued a combat order.

LIST OF THE BIGGEST SETTLEMENTS LIKE AND CAPTURED BY THE SOVIET TROOPS AS A RESULT OF THE NIGHT STORM

Date Settlement storm point

December 19, 1941 | Tarusa 19th brigade, units of the 5th Guards. SD

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Offensive

Moscow Kaluga

Date Settlement Offensive assault point operation 09/08/1942 Krasnozna- 23 TC Donbasskaya
mensk

08/23/1943 | Kharkiv Connections of Belgorodsko- 53, 69, 7 guards. ar- | Kharkiv

MII 09/21/1943 | Anapa Novorossiysko-Tamanskaya

10/3/1943 Taman 107 sbr, 55 Novorossiysk

GV. SD Tamanskaya 10/14/1943 | Zaporozhye 23 TK, tv. MK 61943 Kv = | MAZtA

11/7/1943 Fastov 9] detachment, 6th Guards. Kyiv TC 12/28/1943 | Kazanmy 8 Guards. TC
Zhytomyrsko Berdychivska

12/28/1943 | Korostylev 129 guards. SD Zhytomyr-Berdichevskaya 01/19/1944 | Krasnoye Selo | 63 guards.
SD Krasnoselsko-Roshchinskaya 02/8/1944 Connections of Nikopolskaya 66 and 32 SC Krivorozhskaya
| March 28, 1944 [St. Relics 1] guards. TC Proskurovo-, Chernivtsi 04/04/1944 | Ternopil 4 guards.
TC Proskurovo- Chernivtsi

14.04.

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Date of assault

07/01/1944 Borisov 7th Guards. sd, 83 guards. | Belarus sd, 31 sd

July 17, 1944 | Zolochiv 322 sd Lviv-Sandomierz 07/19/1944 | Peremyzhlyany | 6th Guards MK
Lviv region — 27.07. [07/27/1944 63 sk, 3 guards. MK | Siauliai = | 07/27/1944 | Peremzhil 11th Guards.
TC, 6th Guards. | Lvivsko-TK, 287 sd e -

January 18, 1945 | Barca 237 SD East Carpathian 01/18/1945 | Piotrkow 52 guards. tbr, 16 | Sandomiro
guards mbr Silesian 01/21/1945 | Wilenberg, Connections East Prussian I 41 SK

14. OI | 02/14/1945 | 32 Guards SC | Lower Silesian | Silesian

02/17/1945 Connections East Prussian 41 SK

03/24/1945 55SK, 117SK _ Upper Silesia | Silesian

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Offensive

Date Settlement storm point

04/25/1945 | Ketzin 6th Guards. MK, 35 guards. | Berlin Mechbr

The battle at night was carefully planned. "The commander of the regiment," noted in the Combat Manual of the Infantry, "develops a detailed plan for a night attack, which provides for reconnaissance, protection, destruction of obstacles, measures to maintain the direction of attack, tasks for battalions (companies), communications, order of rendezvous and attack, fire support, as well as actions after capturing the positions of the enemy". The battalion commander undertook not later than an hour and a half before dark to set tasks on the ground for company commanders, commanders of attached and supporting assets, to inform them of the night attack plan. The headquarters of a division (regiment) was entrusted with the task of organizing interaction, observation, commandant service, lighting the area, bringing signals and methods of identifying friendly troops.

The headquarters of the corps and armies worked out recommendations for the use of light signals at night, a plan for interaction with aviation, instructions for preparing troops for combat operations at night. Artillery staffs conducted calculations for blinding enemy observation posts and fire weapons, signalmen - the procedure for using figurative, mobile, radio and wire weapons.

, The troops were preparing for the night battle. Training sessions were conducted with the personnel. IN Due to the fact that the night had a great psychological impact on the soldiers, helping to increase their impressionability and nervousness, educational work was intensified. There have been a number of special events

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measures for the preparation of military equipment and weapons: tanks and self-propelled artillery installations were marked with identification marks, they were loaded with tracer bullets and lighting equipment.

... Summer 1943. Battle of Kursk. Having repelled the enemy's blows, the Soviet troops on the southern Kursk ledge began to carry out the Belgorod-Kharkov offensive operation. Its climax for the troops of the Steppe Front (commanded by General of the Army I.S. Konev) was the assault on Kharkov, the largest industrial and administrative center of Ukraine. On the approaches to it, the enemy created strong defense lines, and around the city - a fortified bypass with a developed system of strong points. The city was also adapted for defense. All this predetermined the extremely fierce nature of the struggle. The front commander understood this very well:

"We began to carefully prepare... Together with the commander of the artillery of the front, tankers, aviators... we studied the most advantageous approaches to the city... we figured out where and with what forces it would be better to strike. Assessing the terrain, the nature of the enemy's fortifications, they planned a maneuver with their troops, a place where it would be expedient to concentrate the main striking force of artillery, where it would be more convenient to deliver a tank strike, where to aim aviation ... It was necessary to take into account all the positive and negative, to find the right key to success ... I finally came to a final decision: the most advantageous direction for delivering the main attack is the northwestern one, where the 53rd Army is located ... Here \ the best approaches to the city, forest, commanding heights the whole of Kharkov is visible.

On the basis of the commander's plan, the operation plan was detailed. There was an intensive training of troops and staffs. Political work was carried out in subdivisions and units. There were party meetings. On by

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The agenda of the day was the task of the communists in battle. A participant in one of them was the commander of the troops of the front, I.S. Konev. It took place in the rifle battalion of the 89th Guards Rifle Division. "The duty of the party organization and members of the party bureau," said major Tatulyan, speaking at it, "is to explain to each soldier the significance of our combat mission, to inspire confidence in the success of our cause, the determination to fight selflessly, to show themselves an example of discipline and military skill. Let the Communists be ahead—such is the essence of the resolution of the Party meeting, at which Ivan Stepanovich shared his experience with the Communists.

The tension of the situation grew. By the end of August 22, the 5th Guards Tank and 53rd Armies had captured Kharkov from the southwest and west, while the 7th Guards Army continued to squeeze the ring from the east and southeast. At the disposal of the enemy, who by this time had brought two divisions from the reserve, there remained only the railway and highway leading from Kharkov to the south.

In his memoirs, I.S. Konev. "It was possible, of course, to throw forces sufficient to cut this corridor, surround the enemy in the city and finish him off there ... - noted I.S. Konev. — The destruction of such a large group in a fortified city

It would take a lot of time and sacrifice. There could have been a second solution - to storm the city, drive the enemy out of it and complete the defeat of the remnants of the enemy "unions outside the city."

With every passing hour, the position of the Kharkov grouping of the enemy became more and more formidable. The complete futility of further struggle for the city, the danger of encirclement of the troops were so obvious that the only chance of salvation from complete extermination

9 Assaults of the Great Patriotic

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was their rapid retreat to the south. By this time, the Hitlerite leadership had completely lost all hope for the successful development of a counterattack by the Akhtyrskaya group against Bogodukhov. On the afternoon of August 22, the fascist German command was forced to begin a withdrawal from the Kharkov area. Assessing this decision, the commander of Army Group South, Manstein, in his work Lost Victories, wrote: "The danger of the encirclement of Kempf's army in the Kharkov region was threateningly approaching ... The command of the group was not going to sacrifice the army in the battle for Kharkov. Kharkov was surrendered in order to release forces for both threatened flanks of Kempf's army and prevent its encirclement.

In order to prevent the enemy from withdrawing the troops defending Kharkov from the blows of the Soviet formations, the commander of the Steppe Front troops ordered a night assault

cities.

Recalls the chief of staff of the front, Lieutenant General M.V. Zakharov:

"For us, the participants in the battles for Kharkov, the night of August 23, 1943 will remain a memorable one for life. Before us opened a panorama of the city at night, illuminated by flashes, explosions, fires and shaking with a terrible roar of guns. Huge masses of troops were concentrated on a relatively small area adjacent to Kharkov. The soldiers of our front were well aware that the decisive stage of the victorious offensive in the Kharkov direction was beginning - the assault on the city. We knew that our brothers, Soviet people, who had endured all the suffering of the Nazi occupation, were languishing in the city."

Formations of the 53rd, 69th and 7th Guards armies took part in the battles on the streets of Kharkov. From the west, the 89th Guards Belgorod (commander Major General M.P. Seryugin) and the 107th Rifle Division (commander Colonel P.M. Bezhko) of the 53rd Army broke into the city.

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Troops of the 69th and 7th Guards Armies pressed the enemy from the north and northeast. Formations of the 7th Guards Army began the offensive with the actions of forward detachments, and at 2 am on August 23, the army went on the general offensive. One of the first to break into the city were units of the 1243rd Rifle Regiment of the 375th Rifle Division (commander Colonel P.D. Govorunenko) of the 69th Army. Soon after them entered the city and other parts of this division. The enemy, withdrawing the main forces to a previously prepared line, covered the retreat with strong rearguards, supporting them with artillery and mortar fire.

During these last hours of their stay in Kharkov, the fascist thugs set fire to the city numerous times, and it flared up in many places at the same time. Hundreds of industrial and civil structures were blown up by the Nazis. In the darkness of the night, illuminated by the glow of numerous fires, flashes of explosions, Soviet soldiers fought the last battle for Kharkov. Showing courage and courage, they bypassed the fortified positions of the enemy, infiltrated his defenses and boldly attacked the enemy garrisons from the rear. Neither mines, nor barbed wire, nor numerous fires and blockages in the streets, nor other obstacles could stop the Soviet soldiers. Already in the course of the fighting, the engineering troops began to clear the city of mines.

By 12 o'clock on August 23, Kharkov was completely cleared of the Nazi troops. The inhabitants of the city enthusiastically welcomed the soldiers-liberators. Most of the German group defending the city was destroyed. The remnants of it retreated, pursued by Soviet troops, across the rivers Merefa and Mzha. The enemy threw a lot of military equipment.

Thus, one of the heroic pages in the history of the Great Patriotic War ended with the brilliant victory of the Red Army - a long and stubborn struggle for

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the most important political, economic and strategic center in the south of the country. During the war, Kharkov changed hands four times. On August 23, 1943, he was forever returned to the Fatherland. On August 26, Pravda wrote: "The Germans themselves called Kharkov the eastern gate to Ukraine, the lock on the doors of Ukraine, the key to Ukraine. The victory of the Red Army broke the German castle, flung open the gates and opened the expanses of the Ukrainian land to the Soviet liberation weapons. Selected German divisions were defeated near Kharkov, Hitler's plan to use Ukraine as a base for supplying the bandit German army was wrecked. The dawn of the liberation of Ukraine brightly flares up over the Dnieper. The exhausted, tormented Soviet people are sensitively listening to him both on his left and on his right. shores to glad tidings coming from the East."

FROM THE SOVIET INFORMBUREAU Operational summary of August 23

"Today, our troops in fierce battles broke the resistance of the enemy and stormed the city of Kharkov. Soviet divisions broke into Kharkov from the west, north and east. Fierce street fighting ensued. Our assault detachments drove the Germans out of the fortified houses and fortifications. This afternoon, Soviet troops defeated the German garrison defending Kharkov, and completely captured the city. The enemy has suffered huge losses and is retreating under the blows of our troops. Many trophies have been captured.

West of Kharkov, our troops continued to fight with large forces of German infantry and tanks. Soviet soldiers repelled all enemy counterattacks and destroyed up to 2000 enemy soldiers and officers, knocked out and burned at least 40 German tanks. On another site

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Some fighters of the N-th formation, overcoming the resistance of the enemy, moved forward and occupied 15 settlements. In the battles for these points, at least two battalions of German infantry were destroyed. 25 guns, 32 mortars, 162 machine guns and other trophies were captured from the enemy.

Our pilots shot down 18 enemy planes in air battles during the day. In addition, 11 German aircraft were shot down by anti-aircraft artillery fire.

The offensive of the Red Army, which began in July 1943 with a counterattack in the region of Orel and Belgorod, continued to develop successfully in September. For the Germans, there was a threat of losing the Donets Basin and the Left-Bank Ukraine. Meanwhile, Donbass, as the largest coal industrial base, was of great importance for the enemy, and the steppe regions of the Left-Bank Ukraine were the most important source of food resources. Therefore, the German command, regardless of the losses, demanded from their troops at all costs to delay the advance of the Red Army and prevent its approach to the Dnieper. The troops of the Southwestern and Southern fronts (commanders General N.F. Vatutin and R.Ya. Malinovsky), relentlessly pursuing the Germans and inflicting huge losses in manpower and equipment, successfully advanced to the west. On September 22-23, the troops of the Southwestern Front reached the Dnieper between Dnepropetrovsk and Zaporozhye, and the troops operating on the left wing of the front met sharply increased resistance from the Germans on the outskirts of the Zaporozhye bridgehead.

The Zaporozhye bridgehead occupied a strip of 40 km along the front and 18-20 km in depth. The outer contour of the bridgehead reached 60 km, covering the city with a semicircle from the north, east and south. The size of the bridgehead made it possible to concentrate in it a grouping of troops in 10-15 divisions, equipped with powerful equipment.

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The course of the operation to liquidate the Zaporozhye bridgehead (10-14.10.43)

The defense of the bridgehead was based on two defensive lines. The first of them, being the main position of the German defense, formed the outer contour of the bridgehead and passed along the line of the river Vilnaya, Vasilyevsky, station Yantsevo, Grigorievka, Malo-Ekaterinovka. from vos

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the exact outskirts of Zaporozhye, the front edge of the line was removed by 12-18 km. At the front edge there was a continuous anti-tank ditch 5-6 m wide and up to 3-4 m deep. In some areas this ditch was flooded with water. Directly behind the anti-tank ditch began the front edge of the main defensive zone with a deeply developed system of bunkers, continuous trenches, bomb shelters and dugouts. Firing points, bunkers and dugouts were located in a checkerboard pattern to a depth of 1.5-2 km: in some, the most important areas, their saturation reached 20-25 structures per] km of the front. The Germans built here especially strong underground shelters of the "catacomb" type, the depth of which reached 7 m. Some shelters were designed to accommodate several hundred people. The most important directions on the outer bypass were reinforced with barbed wire and widely developed minefields. The flanks of the frontier were covered in the north by the Dnieper and in the south by the Dnieper floodplains. The northern face of the bypass was strengthened by the flooded valley of the river. Vilnaya.

In front of the outer bypass, a forefield was created several kilometers ahead, where strong strongholds were placed, scattered throughout its entire depth. All settlements on the outskirts of the outer bypass were adapted to all-round defense.

The second line, constituting an internal defensive bypass, adjoined directly to the eastern outskirts of Zaporozhye and its suburbs. The front line ran along the line: south of Pavlo-Kichkass, eastern outskirts of Zaporozhye, Vinogradnaya gully, north of Balabino. To defend the bridgehead, the enemy concentrated six infantry divisions (123rd, 125th, 294th, 304th, 333rd, 335th), the 16th tank division, a separate tank battalion and other reinforcements. The grouping consisted of 35 thousand personnel, 590 guns, 415 mortars, 200 tanks and assault guns.

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Assault on Zaporizhia by formations of the 23rd Panzer Corps ON THE NIGHT OF October 13-14, 1943

On the afternoon of October 13, a meeting of the Military Council was held at the advanced observation post of the front commander, at which the issue of a night assault on Zaporozhye was considered.

"Night assault," recalled Marshal of the Soviet Union R.Ya. Malinovsky - in which such a large number of troops would participate, was held for the first time in the Great Patriotic War. This circumstance embarrassed some members of the Military Council, and when the order was given for a night assault on Zaporozhye, a languid silence reigned at the observation post, where a lively exchange of opinions was going on. Finally, it was broken by the confident voice of the commander of the 8th Guards Army, General V.I. Chuikova: "The decision is correct. Let's take Zaporozhye." He was supported by the commanders of the mobile corps, and then by all the generals and officers present here.

The three armies allocated for the night assault on Zaporozhye (3rd, 8th Guards and 12th Armies), |

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increased the enemy in manpower by 2.2 times, in artillery - by 2.1 times, in tanks and self-propelled guns - by 1.6 times.

The troops were given the following missions: "Coming from 10 p.m. from three directions: from the northeast, east and southeast, decisively storm the city at night and capture it by dawn on October 14, eliminating the Zaporozhye bridgehead." The CP and NP were as close as possible to the troops in order to clearly control them, to prevent mixing of units, since the infantry and tanks advanced at night along converging directions. The command and control of the troops was carried out through personal communication and through liaison officers. The direction of the attack and the interaction of the infantry with the tanks was carried out by means of tracer bullets and missiles.

All units participating in the assault were prepared for combat operations at night. They learned how to advance quickly in the dark, attack boldly and silently, and relentlessly pursue the enemy. Night exercises applied to all branches of the military; both tankmen and gunners learned these actions. The troops were taught how to penetrate deep into the rear of the enemy in combat, how to use leading light signals to maintain directions, and missiles and tracer bullets for target designation. The troops mastered the light and sound signals of interaction, learned to identify their own in the dark. Classes were conducted tensely, at an accelerated pace. In order to train all troops, army commanders and commanders of formations carried out frequent replacement of reserve regiments by units from the front line.

A large role in the night assault on Zaporozhye was assigned to the 23rd Tank Corps under the command of General E.G. Pushkin. Tank crews studied the direction of attacks on the ground, and special tank landings and assault groups were allocated for fighting in the city. The sappers prepared to overcome the anti-tank ditch by the troops.

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To organize interaction with the infantry, a joint offensive plan was worked out. The rifle divisions were to advance behind the tank brigades and develop and consolidate their success. The organization of interaction in the 23rd building was given 5 hours of daylight and 2 hours of darkness. General landmarks were established on the ground and the lighting order was determined. It was decided to trace the direction of attacks of tank units with pegs with white arrows, clearly visible at night. Each tank company was allocated a column leader from the officers of the rifle troops. Landing forces were assigned to tank units, and each tank was assigned two or three fighters who guarded the vehicles from enemy fighters and provided target designation. For better identification, tanks and self-propelled guns had identification marks on the sides and rear in the form of geometric shapes applied with white paint.

The exit of tanks to the established line was signaled by stoplights and a short glow of headlights on the move. The infantry signaled the exit to the line by the light of pocket torches. Target designation was carried out mainly by tracer bullets and projectiles. Rockets were used only to illuminate the enemy and obstacles, as well as ways to bypass them. It was established that before approaching the anti-tank ditch, tanks move in infantry combat formations, and after overcoming it with the landing force, they will have to rapidly move forward, leading the infantry. In order not to reorganize the troops, the offensive lines at night remained the same. Much attention was paid to intelligence and the moral and political training of personnel. On October 13, reconnaissance in force was carried out on the southeastern approaches to the city. On the same day, special combat leaflets were issued with the appeal: "Guardsmen! Forward to storm the city!"

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So, without giving the enemy a respite, which he could use to secure on intermediate strongholds or on the internal defensive bypass of the bridgehead, the front commander decided to complete the liquidation of the bridgehead by a night assault, carried out simultaneously by all the troops operating against the bridgehead, with the involvement of 23 th Tank And | th Guards Mechanized Corps.

The troops were assigned the following tasks, which they had to solve by night assault. 12th Army (commanded by Major General A.I. Danilov), 8th and 3rd Guards Armies (commanded by Lieutenant General V.I. Chuikov and D.D. Lelyushenko) at 2200 hours on October 13, start storming the internal fortifications of the bridgehead along the entire front, preventing the enemy from gaining a foothold on the internal defensive bypass, capturing Zaporozhye and throwing the enemy into the Dnieper. (Scheme.) The 1st Guards Mechanized Corps (commander - General I.N. Russidnov) received the task at 22:00 on October 13 to attack the enemy from the Lucernovsky line, to capture Zaporozhye and the Dnieproges dam by dawn on October 14, not allowing - ku blow it up. The 23rd Panzer Corps was ordered to attack the enemy from the line of Kol. Novo Yelenovka, Novo-Aleksandrovka and capture the southern part of Zaporozhye by dawn. On the night of October 14, the 17th Air Army (commanded by General V.A. Sudets) was tasked with bombing enemy crossings near Zaporozhye and supporting the offensive of the 12th and 8th Guards Armies.

The main task of artillery was to escort infantry and tanks with wheels, destroying resisting strongholds and enemy groups with direct fire. With these targets, a large number of guns were allocated to the troops for direct fire, including 122- and 152-mm self-propelled guns.

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At 10 pm on October 13, the troops of the front went over to the offensive. The enemy removed tanks from the northern part of the city, which were operating against units of the 12th and 8th Guards armies, and sent them against the 39th Chaplin tank brigade in the center of the city. A heavy tank battle ensued inside the city, as a result of which the enemy, having suffered heavy losses, was forced to retreat first to the northern outskirts of the city and then, under the cover of his anti-tank guns placed at the corners and intersections of streets, as well as on the squares of the city, went to the crossings. By 18 o'clock, only the northern part of the city remained in the hands of the enemy, for which stubborn battles were fought by formations of the 12th Army. Troops of the 8th and 3rd Guards Armies also began their offensive at exactly 22:00 on October 13. Units of the 12th Army, supported by a large number of direct-fire guns of various calibers, by 04:00 on October 14 occupied enemy strongholds in the villages of Sredny, Severny, and Zeleny. Entering the area of factories and industrial settlements, the troops continued their offensive.

On the offensive front of the 8th Guards Army, after a ten-minute artillery preparation, a decisive and swift attack, the enemy defenses were broken, and the rifle units, advancing after the tanks of the 1st Guards Mechanized Corps, threw the enemy back to Zaporozhye. Even before dawn on October 14, part of the 8th

guards army approached the eastern outskirts of Zaporozhye. The troops of the 3rd Guards Army, in cooperation with the tank brigades of the 23rd Tank Corps, successfully developed the offensive and by 6 o'clock captured the entire southern part of the city.

The events of that night are narrated by General D.D. Lemoshenko:

"Of course, the enemy did not expect an attack by such large forces. Tankers of the corps E.G. Pushkin together with the 59th Guards Rifle Division

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G.P. Karamyshev and the 266th Infantry Division K.G. Rebrikov overcame the anti-tank ditch, captured the settlements of Stepnoye and Mokraya and rushed to the city. But on the way there was a strong node of resistance in the area of the village of Yuzhnoye. It was not possible to master them on the move. Then, using a skillful maneuver, the 39th tank brigade of Colonel S.I. Besspalov in cooperation with the 3rd Tank Brigade of Colonel I.A. Nine of the 23rd tank corps and infantry of the 59th guards and 266th rifle divisions captured this village, bypassing it from the south.

Now the gates to the city were opening, but two rivers flowed near Zaporozhye: Moskovka and Mokraya. Forcing them was not an easy task. The floodplain was swampy. Tank brigade of Colonel S.I. Besspalov, in close cooperation with the 59th division, managed to overcome both water barriers at night within two hours. Ahead was the combat vehicle of Lieutenant P.V. Kachimsky (driver - senior sergeant B.M. Romanchuk) with a squad of sappers on the armor of the tank. They boldly broke into the battle formations of the enemy and crossed both rivers on bridges on his shoulders with lit headlights. With rapid fire from a cannon and a machine gun, they were supported by the tank of Lieutenant Kantselyaristov, advancing behind them. Brave scouts were then awarded.

Soon, a swift attack began on the southern outskirts of the city by the forces of the 23rd Tank Corps, the 59th Guards and the 266th Rifle Divisions. On the morning of October 14, the 59th Guards Rifle Division broke through to the city center along with the tanks of E.G. Pushkin, followed by the main forces of the 3rd Guards Army - the 32nd and 34th Guards Rifle Corps.

On the offensive front of the 12th Army, especially intense battles unfolded in the factory suburb of Voznesenka. Here, the assault detachments were engaged in hot street battles with enemy infantry groups, who fiercely fought back in the factory buildings and houses of workers in the settlements.

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cov. The enemy garrisons of the city's strongholds, covering the withdrawal of their units across the Dneproges dam, tried to hold out as long as possible. However, only insignificant scattered groups of the enemy managed to slip through the dam of the Dneproges to the western bank of the Dnieper. Until the evening, Soviet troops continued to liquidate small enemy groups that settled in some strongholds and did not surrender.

ORDER OF THE SUPREME COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TO ARMY GENERAL R.Ya.
MALINOVSKY

"The troops of the Southwestern Front, continuing their successful offensive operations, broke the enemy's fierce resistance and today, October 14, by storm captured the large regional and industrial center of Ukraine, the city of Zaporozhye, the most important transport hub of railways and waterways and one of the decisive strongholds. in the lower reaches of the Dnieper ... "

In the autumn of 1943, the Wehrmacht took all possible measures to carry out a systematic withdrawal from the Left-Bank Ukraine, at the same time to create an impregnable "Eastern Wall" ("O \$ {ia }]), the main part of the structures of which passed along the Dnieper. This task was not an easy one. Unauthorized abandonment of defense lines, traffic jams at home became more and more frequent.

horns, mixing outgoing columns, confusion at the crossings. A participant in those events, the former commander of the 48th Panzer Corps, General Mellenthin, wrote: "There was no longer a solid front, and mobile units of the Russians were already operating in our deep rear. We had to retreat to the Dnieper as quickly as possible and therefore took great risks and

possible

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heavy sacrifices. We could not stop our withdrawal during the daytime, as the situation was too serious, and those who fell behind or fell under air strikes were left to fend for themselves.

In the second half of September, the pace and scope of the offensive of the Soviet troops continued to grow. It developed most successfully in the zone of the Central and Voronezh Fronts (commanders - Generals of the Army R.Ya. Malinovsky and N.F. Vatutin), reinforced by the reserves of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, in the Kiev and Gomel directions. The gap in the front at the junction of Army Groups "Center" and "South" was expanding more and more. The efforts of the fascist German command to restore direct communication between them did not lead to success.

The troops of the right wing of the Central Front crossed the Desna and on September 16 liberated Novgorod-Seversky. The German defense on the Desna collapsed, and the Wehrmacht command could no longer, relying on this defensive line, strike at the flank and rear of the Soviet troops advancing in the Gomel and Kiev directions. The troops of the left wing of the Central Front continued to develop the offensive towards the Dnieper. They had yet to cross the Desna south of Chernigov. To capture the crossings across the river, forward detachments were created from mobile units, reinforced by artillery and engineering units. On the night of September 19, troops of the Central Front crossed the Desna east and southwest of Chernigov. Having captured bridgeheads on the right bank, the main forces of the 13th Army continued to develop the offensive to the Dnieper, and part of the forces bypassed Chernigov from the east and west. Formations of the 61st Army (commanded by Colonel-General P.A. Belov) and the 7th Guards Cavalry Corps advanced towards the city from the northeast.

By the end of September 20, having broken the enemy's stubborn resistance after two days of fighting, the troops of the 28th Rifle Corps (commander Major General A.N.

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Chaev) came close to Chernigov: the 148th Rifle Division (commander Major General A.Ya. Meshchenko) from the east, and the 181st Rifle Division (commander Major General A.A. Saraev) - from South. The 211th Rifle Division (commanded by Major General V.L. Mozhlinovsky) cut the Chernihiv Highway at the Mikhailo-Kotsyubinskoye, Andreevka section. However, it failed to reach the railroad and finally cut off the enemy's Chernihiv grouping of the escape route to the west. The 77th Guards Rifle Division (commander - Major General A.M. Astapov) of the 61st Army, which had the task of cutting off the escape route to the north for the Chernigov group of the Nazis, could not do this.

On the night of September 21, the main forces of the 203rd security division, separate units of the 2nd and 12th tank divisions, as well as various rear and special enemy units and subunits, were defending directly in the Chernigov area. To the north of Chernigov, the main forces of the 12th German Panzer and 1st Hungarian Infantry Divisions operated, and to the west, the 2nd Panzer Division. Keeping the communications in the northern and northwestern directions in their hands, the fascist German command continued stubborn resistance in the Chernigov region, striving to hold it as long as possible, pin down the Soviet troops here and thereby create more favorable conditions for the withdrawal of their main troops. forces for the Dnieper.

In the current situation, it was necessary to complete the defeat of the Chernigov enemy grouping in the shortest possible time and liberate the city of Chernigov. Therefore, the commander of the 28th Rifle Corps decides to take Chernigov by night assault. At 15:00 he

assigned tasks to the commanders of the 148th, 181st, and 211th rifle divisions, the commander of the 129th separate tank brigade, Major A.M. Savchenko (corps reserve), commanders - 874th anti-tank destroyer

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regiment to Lieutenant Colonel A.P. Fedorov, 476th mortar regiment to Major V.G. Gladkikh, 1287th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Ostroglazov. Having given his subordinates time to prepare a night assault, General A.N. Nechaev agreed with the commander of the 16th Air Army, Lieutenant General Rudenko, on the issue of aviation support, in which the 20th Guards. assault aviation division, 273rd fighter aviation division, 6th fighter aviation corps and 271st night bomber aviation division.

After a short fire attack at 0100 September 21, the 148th and 181st rifle divisions launched an assault. The 148th Rifle Division began the assault by forcing the river. Strizhen, on the western bank of which the enemy occupied a prepared defense. A fierce battle at the crossings across this river went on for several hours. At about 0400 hours, parts of the division broke into Chernigov. and started street fighting. During them, the assault group as part of the 1st rifle company of the 654th rifle regiment under the command of senior lieutenant I.L. Bykovsky. During the assault, the path of the company was blocked by a heavily fortified stronghold of the Nazis (starch factory), the approaches to which were mined. It was defended by a rather significant garrison, which had several artillery pieces. An attempt to seize this strong point on the move failed. Then the company commander, having pinned down part of the enemy's forces from the front, used the night conditions to make a bold detour maneuver with the main forces in order to reach the enemy's rear. Subjected to a sudden blow from the rear and not knowing the true size of the Soviet unit operating in front of him, the stunned enemy hastily stopped resistance and left the stronghold, which Bykovsky's company captured almost without loss.

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Overcoming the stubborn resistance of the enemy, units of the 148th Rifle Division completely captured the eastern part of Chernigov by dawn and came out to join the regiments of the 181st Rifle Division advancing from the south. By this time, its 292nd rifle regiment had destroyed the enemy grouping in the southwestern part of the city, having captured the station. The 129th separate tank battalion cut the highway leading from Chernigov to the west. The 288th Rifle Regiment, in cooperation with the 887th Regiment of the 211th Rifle Division, began pursuing the enemy in a westerly direction by dawn.

At the same time, the 77th Guards Rifle Division approached Chernigov from the north. Feeling the threat of encirclement, the enemy garrison began a hasty retreat in a northwestern direction. The enemy carried out his withdrawal under the cover of strong rearguards, the fight against which in the northern part of the city continued for several more hours. By noon on September 21, 1943, the city of Chernihiv was completely liberated by Soviet troops.

As a result of three days of hostilities, the 28th Rifle Corps, in cooperation with the left-flank formations of the 61st Army, defeated the enemy's Chernigov grouping. During the fighting from September 19 to September 21, 1943, two tank and one infantry divisions of the enemy, as well as several of its individual units, were defeated by parts of the corps. More than 2 thousand Nazis were destroyed, up to 30 tanks and assault guns, 10 aircraft, 58 guns and mortars, 5 armored vehicles, as well as many other military equipment and weapons. The number of prisoners exceeded 100 people, 51 guns and mortars, about 80 machine guns, up to 120 tons of fuel, over 500 tons of food and 260 wagons with various military cargo became trophies.

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Formations of the 28th Rifle Corps gained significant experience in forcing large water barriers on the move and capturing the city. As the practice of military operations showed, the successful solution of the task of forcing the Desna was due to the following factors: advance preparation of troops for forcing even on the way to the water barrier; careful organization of reconnaissance of the enemy and the river on a broad front; the expulsion of forward detachments with the aim of capturing and holding bridgeheads until the approach of the main forces; the correct choice of forcing areas, the direction of the main attack and the decisive massing of forces in this direction; the desire for reliable suppression of the enemy by artillery fire, especially allocated for direct fire; the widespread use of improvised means in the absence of a sufficient number of personnel; achievement of suddenness of forcing when it is carried out on a wide front, with the use of smoke in separate sectors; continuity of forcing day and night; the timely development of success in the direction where it was indicated, due to the rapid regrouping of troops from other directions.

In the battles for Chernigov, attention is drawn to the choice of the method of defeating the enemy in the city by two-sided envelopment of his grouping with simultaneous preparation and implementation of the assault at night. The exit of Soviet troops to the flanks of the enemy played a decisive role in the outcome of the struggle for Chernigov, and the night assault ensured their achievement of surprise actions.

As early as the end of September 1943, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front under the command of General of the Army N.F. Vatutin captured bridgeheads on the right bank of the Dnieper north and south of Kyiv. Twice (from 12 to 15 and 20 to 23 October) they undertook offensive

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nie with the aim of capturing the capital of Ukraine. The main blow was delivered from the Bukrinsky (southern) bridgehead, the auxiliary one - from the northern (Lutezhsky) bridgehead. Both operations were not developed. Then the front commander had the idea to strike from the north, where the troops of the 38th Army (commander - General N.E. Chibisov) had by this time managed to significantly calculate the bridgehead for creating a large strike force. General N.F. Vatutin reported the full version of the decision to the Supreme Commander. On the night of October 25, a directive from the Headquarters of the Supreme Command was received.

ORDER TO THE COMMANDER OF THE 1st UKRAINIAN FRONT

"... The Headquarters orders the regrouping of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front in order to strengthen the right wing of the front, having the immediate task of defeating the enemy's Kyiv grouping and capturing Kiev."

The document indicated exactly how to strengthen the right wing and create a superiority in forces and means on the Lyutezh bridgehead. The Stavka proposed to transfer the 3rd Guards Tank Army from the Bukrinsky bridgehead to the area north of Kyiv, using it here together with the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps. The Supreme High Command demanded that the troops be transferred unnoticed by the enemy, using camouflage.

According to the plan of the Headquarters, the formations remaining on the Bukrinsky bridgehead were also supposed to conduct offensive operations and attract as many enemy forces as possible, and under favorable conditions, break through the enemy's defenses and move forward. The directive also contained specific instructions regarding the reinforcement of the right wing of the front with infantry divisions.

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mi. The regrouping was ordered to start immediately, and the offensive to begin on November 1-2, 1943.

Responsibility for the timely regrouping and concentration of troops on the Lyutezhsky bridgehead was assigned to the Deputy Commander of the Front, Colonel-General A.A.

Grechko.

Recalls a member of the Military Council of the front, General K.V. Krainyukov:

"Only 7-8 days were allotted for the preparation of the operation. The road was every day, every hour. And already on the night of October 26, a major regrouping of troops began. On the Bukrinsky bridgehead, tank brigades and artillery units were quietly removed from their positions. Models of tanks were placed in place of the departed combat vehicles, false firing positions of batteries and divisions were equipped. Troops and staffs left the bridgeheads, and many radio stations in the same place continued to conduct normal radio exchanges. Artillery units remaining in the Bukrin area tried to maintain the previous regime of fire. The troops on the bridgehead continued defensive engineering work, deepening trenches, improving

positions.

The appearance was created that everything was going on as usual. But in fact, the 3rd Guards Tank Army, the 7th Artillery Breakthrough Corps, the 23rd Rifle Corps, as well as mortar and engineering units moved north from the Bukrinsky bridgehead. The troops marched at night, in total darkness, under pouring rain, along muddy field roads. Crossing the rivers also presented many difficulties. So, for example, units of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, which made an almost 200-kilometer march along the front line, had to cross the Dnieper twice and once through the Desna, and overcome many other obstacles."

From the dawn of November 3, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front went on the offensive from the Lutezhsky bridgehead.

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Two days earlier, formations of the 27th and 40th armies attacked from the Bukrinsky bridgehead of the enemy. The German command, taking this blow as the main one, urgently regrouped here the SS Panzer Division "Reich", which was in the reserve of Field Marshal E. Mashtein. The command of the 1st Ukrainian Front was counting on this.

On November 4, the fighting took on a tense character. On this day, the weather worsened, drizzling rain began, due to fog, visibility did not exceed 1-3 km. All this made it difficult to use artillery and completely ruled out the use of aviation. Roads for vehicles have become impassable. The enemy brought the forces of two tank and one motorized divisions into battle and launched continuous counterattacks. To increase the pace of the offensive, the front commander committed a tank army to the battle, the 6th Guards Tank Corps of which acted together with the infantry, completing the breakthrough of the enemy's defense. The commander of the 38th Army committed all units of the 5th Guards Tank Corps to the battle. Fierce fighting did not stop day or night.

Tank formations achieved major successes in night battles. With headlights on, sirens blaring, and intense cannon and machine gun fire, they passed through the enemy infantry formations and attacked him swiftly. This original technique of a night attack by tank units, combined with a bold maneuver along forest roads, had a stunning effect on the enemy, who, without exerting serious resistance, began to retreat to the city. Pursuing the enemy, by the morning of November 5, units of the 7th Guards Tank Corps reached the Svyatoshino area and continued their attack on Vasilkov. The cavalry corps was brought into the battle. The 38th Army, having overcome the resistance of the enemy on the outskirts of Kyiv, started fighting in the central quarters of the city in the afternoon. All

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night in Kyiv there were fierce battles. At midnight, units of the 51st Rifle and 5th Guards Tank Corps broke through to the city center.

ORDER OF THE SUPREME COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TO ARMY GENERAL VATUTIN

"The troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, as a result of a swiftly carried out operation with a bold detour, today, November 6, at dawn, stormed the capital of Soviet Ukraine, the city of Kiev, the largest industrial center and the most important strategic defense center of the Germans on the right bank of the Dnieper. With the capture of Kyiv, our troops captured the most important and most advantageous bridgehead on the right bank of the Dnieper, which is important for the expulsion of the Germans from the Right-Bank Ukraine.

The fascist German command was stunned by the force of the blow of the Soviet troops. By the end of November 6, the headquarters of the High Command of the ground forces of the German army noted: "The current situation in the Kiev region indicates the presence of a major enemy breakthrough operation, which will be of decisive importance for the entire Eastern Front. The center of the main danger in the sector of the Army Group "South" is located in the Kyiv region.

During the operation, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front inflicted a heavy defeat on the 4th tank army of the enemy. They destroyed and captured more than 41 thousand soldiers and officers, 1.2 thousand guns and mortars, 600 tanks and assault guns, 90 aircraft and many other military equipment. The plan of the fascist German command to hold out on the Dnieper in the region of Kyiv failed. For 10 days of the offensive, the troops of the front advanced up to 150 km, liberated the capital

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Ukraine, important railway junctions and settlements. On the right bank of the Dnieper in the Kyiv region, a bridgehead was created up to 150 km in depth and more than 500 km along the front, which played a huge role in the liberation of the Right-Bank Ukraine. With their offensive, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front thwarted the counter-offensive of the Nazi troops in the direction of Kirovograd.

Since the beginning of 1944, the combat actions of the Soviet troops unfolded near Leningrad, in the Novgorod direction, in Belarus and the Baltic states.

ORDER OF THE SUPREME COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF TO ARMY GENERAL GOVOROV

"The troops of the Leningrad Front, going on the offensive from the Pulkovo area and south of Oranienbaum, broke through the heavily fortified, deeply echeloned, long-term defense of the Germans and, in five days of intense fighting, moved forward in each direction from 12 to 20 kilometers and expanded the breakthrough in each sector of the offensive up to 35-40 kilometers along the front.

As a result of the breakthrough, the troops of the front on January 19 stormed the city of Krasnoye Selo, which the Germans had turned into a fortress, and Ropsha, an equally powerful stronghold of the enemy's defense and an important road junction. During the offensive, our troops inflicted a heavy defeat on seven German infantry divisions and captured a large group of enemy heavy artillery, which systematically shelled the city of Leningrad.

From the first days of the fighting to eliminate the blockade of Leningrad, especially fierce battles unfolded on the approach to the city of Krasnoye Selo. Here at Voronya

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woe, the enemy created a strong knot of resistance, a kind of fortress in the system of engineering structures created in the area of Krasnoye Selo, Dudergof, Taitsy.

The order was given to storm the Voronya Mountain, without which it was impossible to move forward. The task was entrusted to the soldiers of the 63rd Guards Rifle Division, who became famous during the defense of Khanko in the summer of 1941 and breaking the blockade of Leningrad in the winter of 1943. task like

rightly considered the commander colonel A.F. Shcheglov, was not easy. The fact is that the northern slopes of the height saddled by the enemy were so steep that they resembled the walls of a medieval tower; from the west, Dudergofskoye Lake was pressed against the height, and the railway going from Leningrad to Gatchina was shot through not only by rifle and machine-gun fire, but also by dense artillery fire from pillboxes, covered by mine-explosive barriers. To top it all off, the enemy blew up a dam south of Krasnoe Selo, and the water flooded the area adjacent to the height.

After listening to the opinions of regimental commanders and heads of services, Colonel Shcheglov concluded:

- From the north, a company of submachine gunners under the command of Captain V.G. will go along the river. Massalsky. Its task is to infiltrate behind enemy lines under the cover of darkness and disorganize its administration. The main blow will be delivered by the 188th Rifle Regiment, supported by a tank brigade from the southeast. The other two regiments attack the enemy from the front after the tankers take possession of the western slopes of the mountain. They will complete the defeat of the enemy. We will carry out artillery preparation at dawn.

The assault on Voronya Mountain began on the night of January 19th. First, through the swampy swamp, waist-deep in water, rushed to the enemy submachine gunners under the command of the guard captain V.G. Massalsky. Commander

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The company understood that the enemy could quickly slam a kind of "gate", surround and destroy his unit. The danger was all too real. However, there was no other way to solve the combat mission. From that moment on, the only assistant to the submachine gunners was their military skill, and the darkness was their ally. Every meter on the approaches to the mountain was taken with the greatest difficulty, and every hour of the battle gave birth to new heroes. Six soldiers — senior sergeants I. Burmistrov, A. Lapshin, S. Prokopenko, sergeant N. Gvozdev, corporal M. Zakharov, led by lieutenant V. Sergeev — broke through behind enemy lines and were cut off from the main forces. But they didn't get lost. After setting up an ambush, the soldiers shot dozens of fascists with machine guns and machine guns, blew up a tractor-tractor, a passenger car, and the crew of the enemy guns with grenades... The moment came when the guardsmen found themselves in a dense ring. The battle began - unequal, cruel, deadly. Three managed to break through to the west, three others - I. Burmistrov, S. Prokopenko and V. Sergeev - died the death of the brave. They fought to the last bullet, to the last grenade, to the last breath...

Captain V.G. was wounded for the fourth time. Massalsky. But he continued to lead the fight. And not only led, but also personally destroyed four fascists. Machine gunners made their way to the enemy pillboxes and blocked them. Paratroopers on tanks rushed into a kind of corridor. They were supported by self-propelled artillery mounts. The warriors climbed the icy slopes and threw grenades at the enemy.

It was a little light, and thirty bombers attacked the strongholds of the enemy. Artillery launched a fire raid. Units of the 190th and 192nd rifle regiments rushed into the attack. Particularly effective were the actions of assault groups - rifle platoons reinforced with tanks. They were also given sappers. By the morning of January 19, the enemy

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The Russian garrison on Voronya Gora was surrounded and annihilated. The enemy left Krasnoye Selo. The way was opened to Ropitsa, to connect with the 2nd shock army, which was advancing from the Oranienbaum bridgehead. On January 20, after stubborn fighting and the assault on numerous enemy strongholds, the encircled enemy was destroyed. At the same time, Soviet troops went on the offensive against Novgorod. By the end of January, the troops of the Leningrad Front (commander - General of the Army K.A. Merizkov), with the active support of General A.E. Galovanov was liberated from the fortress-type cities of Tosno, Lyuban, Chukhoda. The blockade of Leningrad was completely

removed. Soviet troops entered Tallinn, liberated the fortress by storm. The way was opened to Belarus, the Baltic states.

FROM THE CHRONICLE OF SUBSEQUENT EVENTS:

"... January 24, 1944

The troops of the Leningrad Front, continuing their successful offensive, as a result of a skillful detour maneuver and a swift attack from the front, captured the city of Pushkin (Tsarskoye Selo) and the city of Pavlovsk (Slutsk) - large railway junctions and powerful strongholds of the German defense.

The troops of the Leningrad Front, developing the offensive, on the night of January 26, stormed the city and the large railway junction Gatchina (Krasnogvardeysk), turned by the Germans into a fortress with a developed system of long-term defensive structures.

February 24, 1944

Commander of the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps, General V.T. Obukhov assigned the task to the commander of the 9th Guards Mechanized Brigade, Colonel P.I. Goryachev to attack the district center of Senno on the move.

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The commander of the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps, General V.T. Obukhov:

"...For the defense of Senno, the fascist German command used an infantry battalion reinforced with field guns, three self-propelled guns, several tanks and a battery of mortars. This, apparently, was all that was able to collect the enemy during the night. As a stronghold, Senno was prepared for defense in advance. Along the roads leading to this settlement, wood-and-earth fences up to 1.5 m thick were erected with a device for firing from embrasures. Ahead of them was a network of trenches dug with communication passages, the approaches to which were covered with barbed wire. In the depths of the settlement, in the area of the church, the Nazis created a defense center with a circular sector of fire, they adapted the adjacent stone buildings for a long street fight. On the whole, the stronghold established in Senno covered the routes to the northwest, west, and southwest. During the defense of Senno, favorable conditions for the enemy were created by the fact that the area along the roads was marshy. With this in mind, the enemy deployed his fire weapons in such a way as to shoot through all the approaches to the settlement, especially open spaces and roads.

The advance detachment detached from the 9th Guards Mechanized Brigade, a motorized rifle battalion, reinforced with tanks of the 45th Tank Regiment, two batteries of the 1823rd Regiment of SU-85 self-propelled guns, a mortar battery and an artillery brigade division.

Using the darkness of the night, tank units bypassed Senno, leaving the southern, eastern and western outskirts. Before dawn, mortars and artillerymen made a sudden fire attack on the enemy. Under cover of fire, tanks and self-propelled guns rushed to attack

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nye guns, on which there was a landing of submachine gunners. Attacking units from three sides broke into the settlement and started street fighting. Two platoons of the 1st Tank Company of the 45th Tank Regiment bypassed Senno from the west and entered the enemy's withdrawal route. The latter tried to retreat to the east, but then he came under attack from the forward detachment of the 8th Guards Mechanized Brigade. Leaving the carts and equipment, part of the Nazis fled through the forests, and the rest were destroyed or

were taken prisoner.

The suddenness and swiftness of the attack, supported by massive artillery and mortar fire, ensured the rapid capture of such an important stronghold as Senno. Heroism and courage in this battle were shown by all the guards who were part of the advance detachment, and those who then arrived in the area ... "

"June 28, 1944 (from the message of the Soviet Information Bureau)

The troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front, having crossed the Dnieper in a 120-kilometer section, broke through the second German defensive line, prepared along the western bank of the river, and by dawn on June 28 captured the large regional center of Belarus, the city of Mogilev, an operationally important center of German defense. in the Minsk direction, as well as with battles, they occupied the cities of Shklov and Bykhov.

June 29, 1942

The troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, having broken the resistance of the encircled Bobruisk group of German troops, on the night of June 29 stormed the city and the large railway village of Bobruisk, an important communication hub and a powerful stronghold of the German defense, covering the directions to Minsk and Baranovichi.

The troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front, with the assistance of the troops of the | th Belorussian Front, as a result of a deep

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Today, on July 3, by storm, they seized the capital of Soviet Belarus, the city of Minsk, the most important strategic center of German defense in the Western direction.

July 19, 1944

The troops of the 3rd Baltic Front, having crossed the Velikaya River, broke through the heavily fortified German defenses developed in depth south of the city of Ostrov and, in two days of offensive fighting, advanced up to 40 kilometers, expanding the breakthrough to 70 kilometers along the front. During the offensive, the troops of the front occupied more than 700 settlements ...

July 21, 1944

The troops of the 3rd Baltic Front, as a result of a skillful detour maneuver combined with a frontal attack, today, July 21, stormed the city of Ostrov, a major communication hub and a powerful stronghold of the German defense, covering the path to the central regions of the Baltic states. .

July 23, 1944

The troops of the 3rd Baltic Front today, July 23, stormed the city and the large railway junction of Pskov, a powerful stronghold of the German defense, covering the path to the southern regions of Estonia ...

August 25, 1944

Troops of the 3rd Baltic Front, continuing their offensive, today, August 25, stormed the city and a major communications hub of Tartu (Yuriev-Derpt), an important stronghold of the German defense, covering the path to the central regions of Estonia...

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September 19, 1944

The troops of the 3rd Baltic Front, going on the offensive, broke through the enemy defenses and today, September 19, captured the city and the large railway junction of Valga, a powerful stronghold of the German defense in the Riga direction.

\$ October 1944

Soviet troops blockaded the capital of Soviet Latvia. The siege continued for almost two weeks. The enemy resisted fiercely.

October 13, 1944 (from the message of the Soviet Information Bureau)

The troops of the 3rd Baltic Front, with the direct assistance of the troops of the 2nd Baltic Front, developing a successful offensive today, October 13, stormed the capital of Soviet Latvia, the city of Riga, an important naval base and a powerful German defense center in the Baltic.

From mid-February 1945, the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front, advancing with stubborn battles at 15-20 km per day, by January 23, its strike force had intercepted almost all the enemy's withdrawal routes beyond the Vistula. The last highway remained at the disposal of the enemy - the Königsberg-Elbing motorway. To complete the encirclement of the East Prussian grouping, the 5th Guards Tank Army (commanded by Colonel General of the Tank Forces V.T. Volsky), advancing at the head of the shock grouping of the 2nd Belorussian Front, on January 23 struck with one tank corps on Elbing, and with the main forces continued the offensive to the north, to the Frisch-Gaff Bay.

The offensive of the tank troops was bold and swift. Thus, the advance detachment of the 31st Tank Brigade, advancing on Elbing, pushing back enemy units, reached the outer fortifications at 21:00 on January 23.

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cities. The advance of the Soviet tanks was so sudden that the enemy garrison of the city at first did not even offer organized resistance to the tankers. The commander of the forward detachment, Captain V.D. Dyachenko decided to break into the city with a sudden attack and, destroying the resisting enemy on his way, slip through it to the north and go to Frisch-Gaff Bay. Having received the order, the tanks moved forward at high speed and with their headlights on. Panic arose in the city, individual enemy guns and machine guns opened indiscriminate fire. However, by 11 p.m., the advance detachment, without losing a single tank, passed through the entire city and, rapidly moving north, reached the coast of the Frisch-Gaff Bay north of Elbing. On January 26, the main forces of the 5th Guards Tank Army also reached the Frisch-Gaff Bay on a front of 15-20 km. The escape routes of the Nazi troops from East Prussia beyond the Vistula were cut off.

March 1945. Upper Silesia. As a result of six-day battles, the troops of the 1st Front (commanded by Marshal I.S. Konev) successfully completed their task of encircling and destroying the enemy grouping in the area southwest of Oppeln. On March 20, completing the liquidation of the encircled grouping of fascist German troops, they simultaneously began to regroup their forces to develop an offensive with the aim of reaching the line of Münsterberg, Patschkau, Troppau. Combat operations of the 21st Army (commanded by Colonel General D.N. Gusev) with the aim of reaching the indicated line began on March 22 and ended on March 31. During this period, especially fierce battles unfolded in the Neissen and Ratibor directions.

On the outskirts of the Neisse, our troops, breaking enemy resistance, reached the city on March 23 and started fighting. The struggle for this large settlement of the fortress type continued not only during the day, but

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and at night. There were fights for every quarter, for every house. The fascist German troops defending the city reinforced the old fortifications with new defensive structures. Barricades and anti-tank fences were erected on the streets of the city. Trenches ran along the stone fences. Machine-gun and artillery firing points were equipped in the basements of houses. Overcoming all obstacles under heavy enemy fire, units of the 72nd Infantry Division under the command of General I.I. Yastrebova on March 24 continued to move towards the city center and by the end of the day completely captured this strong stronghold of the enemy defense and the junction of railways and highways. The capture of Neisse was facilitated by the fact that units of the 229th Infantry Division (commander Colonel A. Pypyrev) and the 26th Separate Heavy Tank Regiment (commander Lieutenant Colonel S.N. Saenko), who were advancing on the city from the north, As a result of a bold maneuver, they captured the railway bridge across the Neisse River. This bridge was used by the Soviet troops to cross the river and for a rapid breakthrough to the city center. Two days later, Soviet troops entered the town of Strehlen.

After capturing the Neisse, the Soviet troops continued to advance in the direction of Patshkau and, overcoming the stubborn resistance of the enemy, reached the Bila River by the end of March 27, where they entrenched themselves in accordance with the instructions of the front commander.

April 1945

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command put the commander of the 4th Ukrainian Front, General A.I. Eremenko's task was to "deal the main blow to the 60th and 38th armies, reinforced by two breakthrough artillery divisions and the 31st tank corps ... to capture the cities of Onava and Moravska-Ostrava, then advance on Olomouc towards the troops of the 2nd th Ukrainian Front.

10 Assaults of the Great Patriotic

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It must be remembered that in the northeastern border zone of Czechoslovakia during 1933-1938, with the help of French military engineers, a fortified area was built, designed to counteract the Nazi troops if they tried to seize the Moravian-Ostrava industrial the region and the whole of Czechoslovakia, the occupation of which Hitler openly spoke from the time of his coming to power in Germany. But already in 1938, when Czechoslovakia was headed by a pro-fascist government, the construction of the fortified area was stopped, it remained unfinished and in 1939, at the behest of the Munich "peacekeepers", it was handed over to the Nazis without a single shot being fired. Since the spring of 1944, the Germans began to restore and modernize the abandoned fortified area. New guns were installed there. Troppau and Moravian Ostrava—the main cities which were especially covered by the enemy in the direction of our forthcoming attack—were turned by the Nazis into powerful centers of resistance. In addition, to the north of these cities, along the left banks of the Opava and Oder, field fortifications stretched for tens of kilometers, interconnected by a single fire system.

From the east and northeast, the approaches to Moravska Ostrava were covered by two defensive lines. The first one ran along the eastern and western banks of the Olsha River - from Bohumin to Cieszyn and Skoczow - and consisted of field-type fortifications, continuous trenches in one or two lines, an anti-tank ditch and long-term points such as reinforced concrete caps and pillboxes. The total depth of defense reached 6-10 km. The second line ran a few kilometers east of Moravska Ostrava, went around the city from the northeast, cutting the Opava River, went to its right bank and followed further about a kilometer south of the city. Both frontiers were a system of powerful pillboxes located in two, and in separate directions in three and

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four lines, with intervals between pillboxes from 120 to 700m. Pillboxes, in terms of the quality of construction and the power of weapons, belonged to the type of first-class structures.

Recalls the chief of staff of the front, Colonel-General L.M. Sandals:

"On the morning of April 30, after artillery preparation, our troops began the assault on Moravian Ostrava. 101st Rifle Corps Lieutenant General A.L. Bondareva and the 1st Czechoslovak tank brigade of the 38th army captured the suburb of Vitkovice and started a battle for the southwestern part of Moravian Ostrava. The Czechoslovak tank brigade under the command of Major V. Janko was the first to break into the city.

Two corps of the 1st Guards Army entered the city from the west and northwest. 127th Light Mountain Rifle Corps, Major General G.A. Zhukov, together with the 2nd Guards Airborne Division, attacking from the west, crossed the Oder and occupied the suburb of Mariana Gory. By noon, he and other formations of the army also liberated the central part of Moravian Ostrava. The soldiers of the 318th Mountain Rifle Division, led by a brave and experienced commander, Hero of the Soviet Union, Major General Vasily Fedorovich Gladkov, especially distinguished themselves there. Later, the corps of General Zhukov went to the Ostravice River and, together with the paratroopers of the division of Colonel S.M. Cherny began to force it. 107th Rifle Corps, Lieutenant General D.V. Gordeev, in heated battles with the enemy, captured the northern part of Moravian Ostrava. In these battles, the fighters of the 167th Infantry Division of Colonel Ivan Semenovitch Grechkosia, my classmate at the Military Academy. M.V. Frunze. This connection was the first to break into the northern quarters of the city. Then parts of the corps of General Gordeev and the 127th Light Mountain Rifle Corps completed the liberation of the eastern part of Moravian Ostrava.

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By 6 p.m. on April 30, the city was completely cleared of the Nazis by the troops of the 38th and 1st Guards Armies, whose actions were successfully supported by aviators of the 8th Air Army, including pilots of the 1st Czechoslovak Air Division. Ahead was the road to Prague ... "

Thus, the battle for the city at night during the Great Patriotic War makes it possible to achieve surprise and becomes an effective means of solving this problem with minimal loss of forces and means. In many cases, it ends successfully. At the same time, the enemy, as he gains experience, strengthens the defense of cities at night, pushing additional troops into the suburbs and even into the foreground, laying mines, and preparing other obstacles. In this regard, a quick assault on the city becomes practically impossible, and there is a need for a preliminary blockade, a planned siege and a decisive assault with street fighting with all the ensuing problems.

CONCLUSIONS FROM HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE

The Great Patriotic War required a revision of many pre-war theories of military art, including those in the field of preparing and conducting an assault on a city.

In early September 1941, Soviet troops experienced certain difficulties in the liberation of the city of Yelnya. And already at the end of September, the General Staff developed and published "Instructions for conducting combat in a populated area." Then this problem was raised by a prominent military scientist Colonel Z. Gareev, who published in the November (1941) issue of the journal "Military Thought" the article "Struggle for Settlements". At its core, this article interpreted the provisions of the Combat Regulations of 1940 in a more detailed form, using for this some calculations from the Field Regulations of the Red Army of 1925.

The following month, the same journal published an article by Brigadier Commissar A. Kadishev "Some Questions of Street Fighting Tactics". At the beginning of the article, he wrote that the struggle for settlements at the present stage of the Great Patriotic War has acquired exceptional significance in view of the fact that the German fascist troops stubbornly strive to retain the Soviet cities and villages they have captured. The advancing Soviet troops all the time, liberating these settlements, have to knock out the occupiers from every building.

Subsequently, the author dwells in sufficient detail on the features of the tactics of conducting street

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fight. He points out that a frontal attack inside the city fortifications in the absence of tanks, armored vehicles and artillery in the ranks of the advancing troops entails heavy losses and often ends unsuccessfully. The author proposes to start an offensive with artillery fire in order to destroy and destroy enemy firing points and fortifications, and tanks and armored vehicles should move ahead of the attacking infantry. The offensive in the city should be carried out in stages, from the capture of one object to another, the movement of troops - in leaps from one shelter to another. At the same time, firing points created in the recaptured buildings should ensure the further advancement of their forces. Combat techniques were considered in some detail when mastering the street and a separate building, conducting combat inside a multi-storey building, and other issues.

At the beginning of 1942, an article "Fights for Settlements" was published in the journal "Military Bulletin", a few months later - an article by 3. Gareev "Features of Controlling the Battle for a Settlement". In the same year, N. Pavlov published the article "Cavalry in the struggle for settlements" in the same place.

In 1943, the question of the rationality of using tanks in the battle for settlements was sharply raised. I.G. became a recognized expert in this field. Ziberov. His first articles on the organization of the assault on settlements using tanks began to appear in the military press already in 1942. In 1943 I.G. Ziberov published a pamphlet "The battle of tanks and motorized infantry for the settlement." At the end of the same year, the journal "Military Thought" published an article by P. Mirovitsky "Tanks in a combined arms battle for a settlement", as well as articles by the hero of Stalingrad, General V.I. Chuikov "Tactics of assault groups in urban combat" and "Assault group is the main link in urban combat".

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In 1944, in the journals "Military Bulletin", "Military Thought" and "Journal of Armored and Mechanized Troops", articles by I. Kuznetsov "Fight of a mobile detachment for a settlement behind enemy lines", O. Losik "A tank brigade in battle for Minsk", S. Melnikov "Combat actions of small tank groups for the liberation of Kiev", P. Pustovoitova "Offensive on a settlement", M. Rakhova "Fights for settlements", S. Khmelev "Fight for a settlement".

The generalized materials of all these articles, thoroughly researched and tested in practice, became the basis for the creation of new Combat and Field Regulations, the development of new instructions and instructions that allowed the Soviet troops to successfully storm a number of fortress cities at the final stage of the Great Patriotic War. war.

The fierceness of the struggle for the city has always been natural. The fact is that the enemy's loss of a city usually caused him considerable economic damage, especially if the city is a junction of railways and other means of communication, the administrative and cultural center of the country; lowered the political and moral state of the army and the population of the country. In addition, a number of factors determined the specifics of the preparation and conduct of this struggle.

Industrial areas, as a rule, were saturated with a large number of industrial enterprises, processing of natural gas, oil products, etc. In this regard, the preparation and nature of military operations of troops in them had features due to the specific conditions of these areas. And above all, the rapid adaptability of settlements to defense. This is explained by the presence in them of strong stone and reinforced concrete buildings, various structures, which can be used for combat operations in a short time. Pro-

industrial facilities, residential quarters, underground structures provide better shelter for troops and equipment than in field conditions, limit the mobility of advancing formations, make it difficult for them to maneuver, covert regroupings, divide the operation into battles that carry local Character, give the defenders the opportunity to conduct long-term hostilities.

Experience shows, however, that the defense in the city also has a number of weaknesses, which must be taken into account by the attackers in their own interests. It is stable, does not have the necessary flexibility. Due to the complexity of manoeuvring, the defender is not always able to react quickly and efficiently to the actions of the attacker. Today, strongholds and nodes of resistance, created in solid buildings and structures, can be destroyed by guided weapons.

During the Second World War, the basis of the defense of large cities and areas adjacent to them were usually centers of resistance and strongholds. The node included one or several blocks, the strong point - several buildings. Main streets and approaches to bridges were covered with anti-tank obstacles, including ditches filled with water, pillboxes and bunkers, barricades, gouges, armored caps, etc. undermined 34). When organizing the defense, underground communications were used: metro, sewerage system, bomb shelters, etc. P.

The scale of the use of various types of facilities in large cities is evidenced by the data in the table. Describing their qualitative side, it should be emphasized that the forts of the cities of Poznan and Königsberg, for example, were underground structures surrounded by a moat 8–10 m wide and deep.

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a mine up to 3 Gm, with brick walls (1.8—2 m) and loopholes. The reinforced concrete bunker in Berlin held between 300 and 1000 people, having five to six floors. Most of them were armed with more than 30 guns of up to 150 mm caliber.

FORTIFICATIONS PREPARED BY THE ENEMY IN SOME CITIES IN 1941-1945

Poznań Up to 140 | About 3500 fortified buildings

Budapest | Budapest | 10° Over 200 Up to 150 | - O

Koenigsberg About 300 More than 100 | Up to 50 | 15 on the outside, I'm in the city

Another feature that influenced the preparation and conduct of hostilities in industrial areas was the composition of the garrisons of cities preparing for defense. As follows from the data in Table. 2, it reached 200 thousand people. The presence in the cities of warehouses with weapons, ammunition, food, as well as repair enterprises and skilled workers made it possible to conduct long-term battles in conditions of complete encirclement. Characteristically, back in December 1942, the Hitlerite command issued an order demanding all

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more or less significant settlements to provide stocks of all types of food for at least eight weeks. The Poznan garrison, for example, had stocks of water, food, medicines and ammunition for one and a half to two months, Berlin - for 30 days.

COMPOSITION OF THE ENEMY GARRISONS DEFENDING SOME CITIES DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Quantity Cities of personnel Composition of the enemy grouping composition, thousand Poznan Combat groups - 86 (guns - 40. tanks and assault guns - 40)

Königsberg More than 130 | Divisions - 5, separate artillery units - 54, separate battalions - 60 (guns and mortars - 4 thousand, tanks - 108, aircraft - 170)

Vienna Divisions — 9. Separate battalions — 15

Berlin More than 200 | Divisions - 5. combat groups - 80, separate units - 400

As a result, during the Second World War, the struggle for cities was extremely fierce, requiring a lot of effort, money and time. She was often with significant losses of the advancing in personnel, equipment and weapons. So, for more than a month, the Nazis held the city of Caen - a key point in the area of the invasion of the Anglo-American troops - in the summer of 1944. For the siege of the French port city of Brest, the Allied command was forced to allocate three infantry divisions. It took more than a day to force the garrison of this

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cities on September 19, 1944 to capitulate. The losses of the advancing reached 10 thousand soldiers and officers. Characteristically, in the nearby cities of Lorian and Saint-Nazare, the fascists defended themselves until the end of the war. On November 8, 1944, the offensive of the 3rd Allied Army began in the Saar industrial region. Metz was surrounded. However, its garrison capitulated only after half a month, while some forts continued to resist almost until mid-December. It is also well known that Odessa and Kyiv were defended by Soviet troops for 73 days, Stalingrad - 163, Sevastopol - 250, Leningrad - 900 days. It took 49 days to defeat the enemy in Budapest, about a month in Vienna, and a month in Poznan.

Past wars are rich in the practice of solving the problems of conducting combat operations in industrial regions with the capture of cities. During the Second World War, Soviet troops liberated 727 cities of the Soviet Union occupied by the Nazis, returned Donbass and the Kharkov industrial region to the country, stormed 484 cities in nine European cities (Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Germany, Norway, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia) and two (China, Korea) Asian countries. Anglo-American troops carried out a number of offensive operations in the industrial regions of France, Italy and Germany. Combat operations to capture cities were fought in local wars in the Middle East in Vietnam, Cyprus, Angola and Ethiopia, and in a number of other regions of the world. An analysis of this experience makes it possible to identify the most important features of the preparation and conduct of operations and combat in densely populated areas.

Preparation of military operations. One of the features of the preparation of offensive operations and battles in industrial areas, especially the assault on fortress cities, was in the past and remains now, as many foreign military experts believe, phased planning of upcoming military operations. isho

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Given that under the above conditions the commander's decision is based on the idea of bypassing the industrial area, the content of the first stage of the operation may be to isolate the main forces of the opposing enemy grouping and dismember it. The development of the offensive of the first echelon in depth is the second stage in the conduct of hostilities. It is legitimate to single out as an independent stage the destruction of the enemy who defended the cities in the rear of the advancing troops.

Particular care in the organization of combat operations, taking into account the characteristics of the terrain, the need for special training of troops is the next characteristic feature of the preparation of an operation. "Combat experience in large cities," was emphasized in the Instructions to the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front of February 13, 1945, "showed that under these conditions, planning

actions of the troops, it is necessary to study the city, the nature of the surrounding area, the location of the enemy occupying the outer contour and the city itself to the smallest detail.

The practice of preparing offensive operations to capture the Berlin, Budapest, Vienna industrial regions shows that in order to plan combat operations in densely built-up areas, headquarters must have data on the layout of industrial complexes and cities, the configuration and size, quality and the density of buildings, the presence of underground structures, the characteristics of rivers, canals and bridges, the size of the population, its relation to the advancing troops, the composition, combat capabilities and the political and moral state of the defending garrison. On the eve of the assault on Koenigsberg in the 11th Guards Army, and Berlin in the 5th Shock Armies, these data came from all types of intelligence, were analyzed and generalized, applied to large-scale maps and plans.

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"Our reconnaissance aircraft," noted Marshal G.K. Zhukov, - filmed Berlin six times, all approaches to it and defensive zones. According to the survey results, trophy documents and surveys of prisoners, detailed schemes, plans, maps were drawn up... The engineering units made an accurate model of the city with its suburbs, which was used in studying issues related to the organization of the offensive, the general assault on Berlin and the fighting in the city center.

When preparing operations (combat actions), the commanders of formations, commanders of formations and units involved in combat operations in densely populated areas, sought to carry out such training on the ground or its layout. Characteristic in this regard is the experience of organizing the assault on Kharkov in August 1943. "We began to carefully prepare for the upcoming heavy battles for Kharkov," recalled Marshal I.S. Konev. "Together with the front artillery commander, tankers, aviators, army commanders... division commanders, we studied the most advantageous approaches to the city... Assessing the terrain, the nature of the enemy's fortifications, concentrate the main striking force of artillery, where it is more convenient to deliver a tank strike where to aim aircraft. It was a complex process... Thus, in thought and doubt, the final plan for the capture of Kharkov was born, the idea of the operation was developed.

The task of organizing combat operations in preparation for the assault on Krakow, Budapest, Vienna and many other large cities was solved in a similar way. To work out the issues of interaction during the assault on Koenigsberg, for example, the headquarters of the Zemland group of troops made a model of the city on a scale of 1:3000. It was made with a pronounced terrain, defensive structures and buildings, exactly matched the plan of this administrative center of Eastern

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Prussia. On the layout, classes were held with the commanders of formations and units that were supposed to storm the city. Before the start of the offensive, all officers, up to and including the platoon commander, were given a plan of Koenigsberg with a single numbering of quarters and the most important objects, which greatly facilitated command and control of troops during the battle.

The experience of past wars convincingly shows that when organizing combat operations in industrial regions, great attention should be paid to the creation of second echelons and reserves capable of solving the tasks of blockading cities and destroying their garrisons, as well as the formation of assault detachments and groups. Their preparation for conducting combat operations in conditions of close combat, requiring high physical fitness, the ability to wield a machine gun, grenade and edged weapons, was under the constant control of commanders and staffs. The problem was solved in tactical combat exercises, exercises and special trainings.

When preparing offensive operations in an industrial region, it is necessary to take into account the specifics of logistical support. It is expressed in increased consumption

ammunition (according to the experience of fighting in Poznan in February 1945, almost four times more than in the field), as well as in the disunity of hostilities (in separate buildings, structures, strongholds and centers of resistance). The noted features necessitate, in particular, the transfer of a significant part of the material reserves of the unit, planning the delivery of many types of materiel directly to the troops engaged in combat operations.

When organizing educational work, commanders, based on the experience of the Great Patriotic War, should keep in mind that the enemy will make the most of the available opportunities for mobilization

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personnel of the garrisons of the population of cities to resist the advancing troops. In Breslau's entourage, for example, Goebbels' speech delivered by him on March 12, 1945 and aimed at the total mobilization of the entire population was widely promoted by all means. Particularly stood out was the provision that "... this is a war not for life, but for death. If the nation is imbued with this spirit to the last boy and girl, it is invincible. On the same days, in the besieged Königsberg, the "führer" of the city, General Wagner, addressing the population by radio, said: "From now on we are mad. We will fight with the fury of a fanatic. Our motto is national rage."

The fascist leadership did not stop before cruel repressions against the local population, including fellow countrymen.

"The storming of the city and preparation for the storming of the city is a very complex issue that requires a lot of time," noted at the military-scientific conference of the Moscow Military District in 2009. "Therefore, it begins well in advance, usually along with the preparation of the defeat of the enemy troops defending on the outskirts of the city (outer bypass). It must be borne in mind that in the city the defense is restored faster than the field defense, and therefore any delay only brings harm to the attacker. Therefore, the offensive that began on the outskirts of the city should continue uninterruptedly and develop into an assault on the city. In all cases, the second echelons should be aimed at bringing them into battle after the breakthrough of the outer bypass. Practice has shown that on the outer contour, due to the stubborn resistance of the enemy and powerful fortifications, battles can become protracted, which will inevitably lead to losses and fatigue of the combat units. Therefore, experience shows that under these conditions it is better to take a short break and prepare the troops for a decisive assault, bring up firepower and ammunition.

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and re-organize the interaction of military branches..." Information about executions in order to eliminate the garrison and the population was covered with the help of newspapers, leaflets, and radio. There was a practice of sending SS men to the garrisons with the task of strengthening control over the behavior of soldiers in battle.

In view of the above, the role of counter-propaganda will increase. The center of educational work must be moved to units and subunits, assault detachments and groups. It is advisable to solve the tasks both by the implementation of organizational measures and agitation and propaganda (individual and group conversations, rallies, popularization of best practices), including among the enemy personnel and the population of the besieged city. Great attention must be paid to assisting commanders and staffs in organizing training, exercises and other types of activities, taking into account the specifics of upcoming combat operations.

Features of conducting operations and battles. Historical experience shows that in offensive operations in industrial centers, the commanders (commanders) showed a desire to bypass and isolate them. The main forces of the advancing troops primarily solved the problem of capturing and holding points (regions) dominating the routes of approach to densely built-up areas and large cities. This is exactly how the formations of the 1st Ukrainian Front acted during the liberation of the Silesian industrial region in January 1945, as well as the British

American troops approaching the Ruhr and Saar industrial regions. It is characteristic that during the Vistula-Oder operation (January-February 1945), the Red Army, rapidly advancing to the west, blockaded about fifteen operational-tactical groupings of fascist troops in the industrial regions of Poland, numbering almost 300 thousand soldiers and officers.

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During the Second World War, the methods of fighting for cities were characterized by great diversity. A significant part of them were captured on the move, delivering swift blows by the forward or main forces of the advancing troops (Kamenets-Podolsk, Czeszokhov, Lodz, Bromberg, Oppeln). Where the enemy managed to prepare for defense in advance, the attackers bypassed the enemy garrisons with the main forces, blockaded them with part of the forces, putting them in unfavorable conditions, forced the enemy to hastily leave the objects defended by him or, with blows from several directions, cut and destroyed him before reinforcements (Gumbinen, Elbin, Thorn) could come to his aid. The advancing troops blocked, besieged and stormed large industrial, administrative and political centers, which the enemy sought to hold with the involvement of large forces (Budapest, Königsberg, Vienna, Berlin). Often, only part of the forces was involved for this, most often the second echelons and reserves (Poznan, Schneidemuhl, Glogau, Breslau). A night assault on the city was also used (Kharkov, Zaporozhye in 1943). Fleets and flotillas actively operated in the coastal direction.

The main indicators characterizing the battles in some cities in 1945

The main indicators characterizing combat dei-. The actions of the division in the city according to the experience of the Great Patriotic War are presented in the table. Their analysis shows that during the conduct of battles in the city, the most typical were relatively narrow zones, relatively low rates of advance. Forces and means were most often echeloned in depth. The depth of tasks, both immediate and subsequent ones, was significantly less

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more than in a field battle. Characteristically, the divisions were reinforced by a large number of tanks, self-propelled guns, guns and mortars. A number of features can also be traced in the use of military branches, as well as types of armed forces.

A number of features should be taken into account in the use of various branches of the ground forces.

Based on the experience of World War II and local wars, motorized rifle formations are least constrained in maneuver when conducting combat operations in densely built-up areas. Their personnel are able to penetrate through trenches and ditches, through gaps in the walls of buildings, through sewer pipes, and underground communication passages, wherever it is convenient for them to hit the defending troops. They can most effectively use the available shelters from weapons of mass destruction. The modern armament of motorized rifle troops makes it possible to create high densities of fire from small arms. Recoilless guns and grenade launchers

contribute to solving the problems of combating enemy armored targets, destroying defensive structures and buildings with a wall thickness of 60–90 cm.

Considering that when conducting an offensive in industrial areas, the independence of military operations of units and subunits sharply increases, it is necessary to draw the reader's attention to the tactics of combat in the city during the Great Patriotic War. Its peculiarity manifested itself mainly in the fact that the task of defeating the enemy in the nodes of resistance and strongholds was most often solved by assault detachments and groups. The remaining enemy in the rear was eliminated by the second echelons. The basis of an assault detachment was usually a rifle or tank battalion of an assault group - a rifle unit (platoon, company), reinforced by sappers (from squad to platoon), flamethrower units, gun and machine gun crews, tanks and self-propelled guns. - artillery installations. The destruction subgroup conducted reconnaissance of objects, under

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moves to them, made passages in mine-explosive barriers. The firing subgroup suppressed the enemy in defensive structures and neighboring firing points. The destruction subgroup, equipped with elongated, concentrated and shaped charges, smoke bombs and grenades, destroyed the structures. The core, consisting of shooters and machine gunners, performed the task of ensuring the approach of the destruction subgroup, as well as the destruction of the enemy.

The practice of creating assault detachments and groups was also used in local wars, in particular in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. At the same time, as foreign military experts emphasize, more and more attention has recently been paid to the actions of outflanking detachments, sabotage and reconnaissance groups, and special forces. The success of the battle for the city of Khomein, for example, during the Iran-Iraq war was basically a foregone conclusion by the organized and initiative actions of small groups of submachine gunners who infiltrated behind enemy lines. They attacked command posts, blew up warehouses, and sowed panic among the population of the besieged city.

The experience of fighting in large cities in past wars allows us to conclude that tank formations are not always able to effectively solve tasks in such specific conditions of the situation. This is due to the difficulties of orientation and maintaining interaction with motorized rifle troops, poor visibility in battle due to fires, smoke and dust. Maneuver and visibility were very limited. It was difficult to fire at buildings due to the maximum elevation angles. The enemy, equipped with various types of anti-tank weapons, quite successfully fought the tanks of the attackers: the 3rd Tank Army lost 280 tanks in the battles for Kharkov (January 1943), the 2nd Guards Tank Army lost 280 tanks in the battles for Berlin - 204, including more than 100 from the fire of Faustniks. Big damage coming

to our tank units in battles for cities in the war in the Middle East, in the Persian Gulf zone, in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Ingushetia by ATGM fire.

That is why during the Second World War the maneuver of tank formations and formations bypassing a large city was considered as the most expedient form of combat operations. This is how the tasks of the tank armies of the Red Army were solved during the liberation of Kiev, Lvov and other industrial centers. A similar approach can be traced in local wars. In order to capture Famagusta, for example, tank columns of Turkish troops in August 1974 bypassed the city from the north and south, blocked it from the west, and motorized rifle units, with the support of aviation, captured this administrative center of Cyprus. In case of forced actions in the city, the practice of creating assault detachments has proven itself to be the most rational way to solve problems.

Based on the experience of the Great Patriotic War, one of the features of the use of artillery in the struggle for cities was that on the eve of the assault, most often short-term (20-30 minutes) artillery preparation with high intensity of fire was carried out. Practice

However, the implementation of long-term artillery preparation (in the battles for Breslau in March 1945 - up to three hours) with a low consumption of ammunition (0.2 ammunition load) did not give a good result. The peculiarity of the use of artillery was also expressed in the fact that most of it (up to 30%), up to heavy systems (152 and 203 mm), was used for direct fire. Rocket launchers were used very effectively to destroy especially strong enemy defenses: in the battles for Berlin, they destroyed 120 buildings that were centers of resistance, and suppressed hundreds of firing points.

A significant part of the artillery operated as part of divisional and regimental artillery groups. Their

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firing positions were usually located somewhat closer to the forward edge than under normal conditions: mortar batteries - 1.5 km, howitzer and cannon batteries - 2-4 km. Direct-fire guns and 82-mm mortars were in the combat formations of the troops. In most cases, the observation posts of battalion and battery commanders were located together with the observation posts of the commanders of assault detachments, and the commanders of artillery units and formations were located next to the observation posts of the commanders of rifle divisions. All this made it possible to increase the effectiveness of the combat use of artillery in the city.

Some features in the conduct of combat operations in industrial regions with the capture of large cities can be traced in the use of special troops.

The range of tasks solved by engineering troops is expanding. Among the most important of them, it is legitimate to include: conducting engineering reconnaissance, equipping the initial area, making passages in various structures, procuring means for an assault, and fighting fires. Underground mine warfare occupies a special place. One of the underground mine attacks was carried out, for example, by sappers of the 62nd Army in Stalingrad in the autumn of 1942. Their blow was aimed at a large stronghold, from which the Nazis fired at the banks of the Volga. A well 5 m deep was equipped, from which a mine gallery 43 m long was dug under the building occupied by the enemy. 3 tons of explosives were placed in the chamber. A powerful explosion completely destroyed the enemy stronghold, burying hundreds of soldiers and officers under its ruins. The sappers of the 309th Rifle Division acted in almost the same way in the battles for Breslau, breaking through a 20-meter gallery between the quarters of the city center. During the storming of Berlin, the soldiers of the engineering troops also solved other tasks: they turned off power plants and electrical networks, disabled water pipes and

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drainage facilities, equipped crossings over rivers and canals.

Features of the offensive in built-up areas, a large amount of special work require much more reinforcement of motorized rifle and tank formations by engineering troops than in field conditions. This is evidenced by the experience of the Great Patriotic War. So, the 18th Guards Rifle Corps during the assault on Budapest had 43 sapper companies. The 235th Rifle Division in the battle for Koenigsberg was reinforced by the 16th Assault Engineer Brigade. In the 8th Guards Army, during the conduct of hostilities in Berlin, the density of sapper companies was 12-15 per kilometer. The main form of their actions was the solution of tasks as part of assault detachments and groups. Being in their combat formations, they removed all kinds of obstacles, blocked and destroyed pillboxes and bunkers, and made passages in the barriers.

During the Second World War, in subsequent local wars in the battles for cities, flamethrower and incendiary means were widely used. In the battles for Breslau, for example, flamethrowers burned 160 enemy targets. The use of flamethrowers at night in the battles for Poznan became very effective for destroying the enemy in fortified buildings, basements and underground structures, setting fire to individual objects and obstacles. Flamethrowers, according to the experience of fighting in

Berlin, in addition to knapsack and high-explosive flamethrowers, as a rule, were equipped with the means of approval. They were used to blind enemy positions, conceal maneuvers, and ensure forcing — during the crossing of the Teltow Canal on April 26, 1945, the smoke screen was maintained from 7 am to noon. As experience teaches, when storming a city it is expedient to use one of the three tactical methods of using smoke. The first is the setting of small (50-200m) frontal smoke screens in order to "dazzle" strong points and firing points

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enemy, masking attacks. The second is placing smoke screens on the flanks of the assault detachment to distract the enemy's attention from the attacking group. The essence of the third method is to smoke the entire area under fire with the help of smoke bombs and grenades scattered on the ground.

Experience shows that the use of technical means of communication becomes more complicated in industrial regions. Due to the large amount of interference and strong screening, the power of radio stations is reduced by 4-5 times. During the conduct of hostilities in Berlin, as a result of a sharp densification of battle formations, up to thirty subscribers worked on the air on one wave. The lack of landing sites almost ruled out the use of communications aircraft. All this necessitates the integrated use of communications (radio, wire, mobile, signaling), bringing control points closer to the troops conducting combat operations, creating auxiliary control points, relay centers and posts, and more thorough equipment of nodes and lines communications in engineering.

Features of the use of aviation are caused by the complexity of orientation, low efficiency in the conduct of combat in the city of fire of small arms and machine guns of aircraft and small-caliber bombs. The experience of combat operations in Lebanon in 1982 also testifies that massed strikes by bomber aircraft with the aim of massive destruction of objects far removed from the attacking troops did not produce the expected effect. The garrisons of these objects usually went to the shelter, and at the end of the raid they quickly restored the fire system. Therefore, it is expedient to direct strikes by bomber and ground attack aircraft first of all at those defense objects that are subject to immediate attack, and at individual vital structures of the city.

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Noteworthy are the political methods of aviation actions used during the Great Patriotic War, when groups of attack aircraft of 4-6 aircraft were most often used to support troops fighting in the city. From the moment of take-off to landing, they continuously kept in touch with the guidance radio stations. Before the start of the attack, in one or two "idle" approaches, the pilots determined the line of combat contact with the enemy, searched for a given target and, on a signal from the commander, attacked it from a height of 600-100 meters. As follows from the data in the table, in the battles for the cities, aviation was most often used massively.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STRIKE MADE BY THE SOVIET AVIATION ON THE ENEMY'S KOENIGSBERG GROUP IN 1945

sorties

and vein I

More than 6000 About 1800

Thus, on April 6, 1945, 516 heavy bombers attacked the constructions of Koenigsberg, dropping 3,700 aerial bombs weighing 550 tons. The next day, aviation made 4,758 sorties, dropping 1,658 tons of bombs. On April 8, another 6,000 sorties were made. During the assault on Poznan, the bombers made 1834 sorties, dropping 558 tons of bombs on the enemy. During the battles for Berlin on April 25 and 26, the 16th and 18th air

armies attacked the defenses of the capital of Nazi Germany, in which 2049 aircraft participated.

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Both during the Second World War and in local wars, in a number of cases, the Navy contributed to offensive operations in industrial regions. During the assault on Königsberg, for example, aviation of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet was used, its artillery participated in the destruction of pillboxes and bunkers, conducted massive fire on batteries, enemy forts, fired at the railway junction and the port, prevented the evacuation of troops, striking at ships and ships in the Königsberg Canal. The fleet carried out, in addition, the landing of two amphibious assault forces. Then, in April 1945, in order to frustrate the plan of the fascist German command, which was trying to withdraw the remnants of the defeated troops from Vienna to the northern bank of the Danube, the Soviet command carried out an amphibious landing with the help of the Danube military flotilla as part of a reinforced battalion, which captured the only survivor bridge and held it for three days.

Quite often used by the Navy in the battles for cities during the war in Korea (1950-1953). Formations of the US 7th Fleet landed troops in Incheon, Yiondok and Seoul, provided air and artillery support to the ground forces that stormed Ukhonjin. Carrier aviation of the Anglo-French fleet bombarded Cairo, Suez, Ismailia and Port Said during the aggression in 1956, and the US fleet bombarded many North Vietnamese cities in the 60s. The amphibious assault as part of the Commandos battalions and the marines played a decisive role in the capture of Cyrene (in Cyprus) by Turkish troops in 1974. The Israeli forces of the fleet in 1973 landed an amphibious assault, which stormed the cities of Ain Suhao and Ras Abu Dara.

An attempt to use airborne troops to assist formations and units of the ground forces in the battles for cities was made in World War II, in

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in particular, the allied command of the landing in September 1944 of units of the 82nd and 101st airborne divisions in the area of Nijmegen and Arnhem. The landing force, however, failed to solve its tasks. Airborne troops operated more successfully in local wars. In December 1948, the Dutch colonialists, for example, landed an airborne assault in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, capturing the leaders of the Indonesian Republic. The Anglo-French command used the airborne troops together with the amphibious assault to capture Port Said and Port Fuad in 1956. In 1961, the American command tried to capture Playa Girón by landing. The Turkish command used airborne assault forces in the battles for Nicosia in 1974.

CONCLUSION

Historical experience, and above all the experience of the Great Patriotic War, shows that battles for cities are becoming the most important component of operations and battles, both on the offensive and on the defensive. At the same time, it was proved that when organizing and conducting offensive operations against cities (in industrial areas) with a high building density, strong brick, reinforced concrete and other structures that are easily adaptable to defense, there are a number of features. They are caused by the fact that industrial facilities, residential areas, underground structures provide better shelter for troops and equipment than in the field, limit the mobility of advancing formations, hinder battles of a local nature, and create an opportunity for the defenders to conduct long-term combat operations.

Historical experience teaches that the main feature of the concept of a combat operation under the conditions considered is expressed in the striving of the attackers to outflank industrial regions and large cities. If this is not possible, provision should be made for the creation of two groupings of troops: the first is to capture key positions around the area (large city) and isolate it, the second

— for mastering the cities located in the industrial center (quarters of a big city). The success of capturing a city (fortress city) prepared in advance for defense and occupied in advance by troops is largely determined, based on experience, by the timely isolation of a blockaded garrison from

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other enemy groupings and reserves, breaking through the outer and inner contours of the city's defense in various directions.

The most important feature of the conduct of combat operations in the city is the use of various branches of the ground forces and special forces in close cooperation, in the form of assault detachments and groups, as well as the use of sea and air assault forces. The types of armed forces (aviation, navy) can also be used in the interests of the troops participating in the storming of the city.

At the same time, it was proved that the battle on the streets of the city with the use of heavy artillery pieces, tanks and other military equipment must either be carefully prepared, or else it will not be effective. Despite this, during the storming of Grozny in late 1994 — early 1995, many developments of domestic military art were not taken into account, which led to large casualties and the loss of military equipment.

Military history does not tolerate subjunctive moods. Each operation and battle is individual and requires a comprehensive assessment of the situation, careful reconnaissance of the enemy, a critical assessment of the capabilities of one's own troops, the professional qualities of subordinate commanders, and the morale of the fighters. Storming the city of all this requires doubly. And the monuments erected to Soviet soldiers on the squares of Budapest, Berlin and other cities testify to their descendants about the victories that the Soviet military art won over the military art of Germany in the Great Patriotic War.

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Runov Valentin Alexandrovich

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i> K. x losses - much greater than in the field "

oh battle. In the early autumn of 1941, Hitler

He categorically forbade his generals

_ - to storm Soviet cities, but the year

later retreated from this rule under Stalin-

' hail, which led to the defeat of the army of Paulus

and turning point in World War II. Stalin

demanding to take cities at any cost - figures

losses of the Red Army in Budapest, Koenigs-

'berge, Breslau, Berlin terrify, involuntarily

making one think about the need for

operations. But they were awarded for successful

assault generously - a whole was established in the USSR

constellation of medals "For the capture" of enemy

cities. At the cost of a lot of blood, it was possible to express

use effective street fighting tactics, cos

give special assault groups, battalions

and entire brigades, amass the richest combat

experience that seemed to guarantee

repeating past mistakes, but

"half a century after the Victory, our generals again

"stepped on the same rake" during the assault on Grozny ...

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